

(A)  
VOL. 21 No. 1

JANUARY  
1907

Vol. 21  
0901. 5636  
PRICE 25cts



ESS ESS PUBLISHING COMPANY

NEW YORK

452 Fifth Ave.

LONDON

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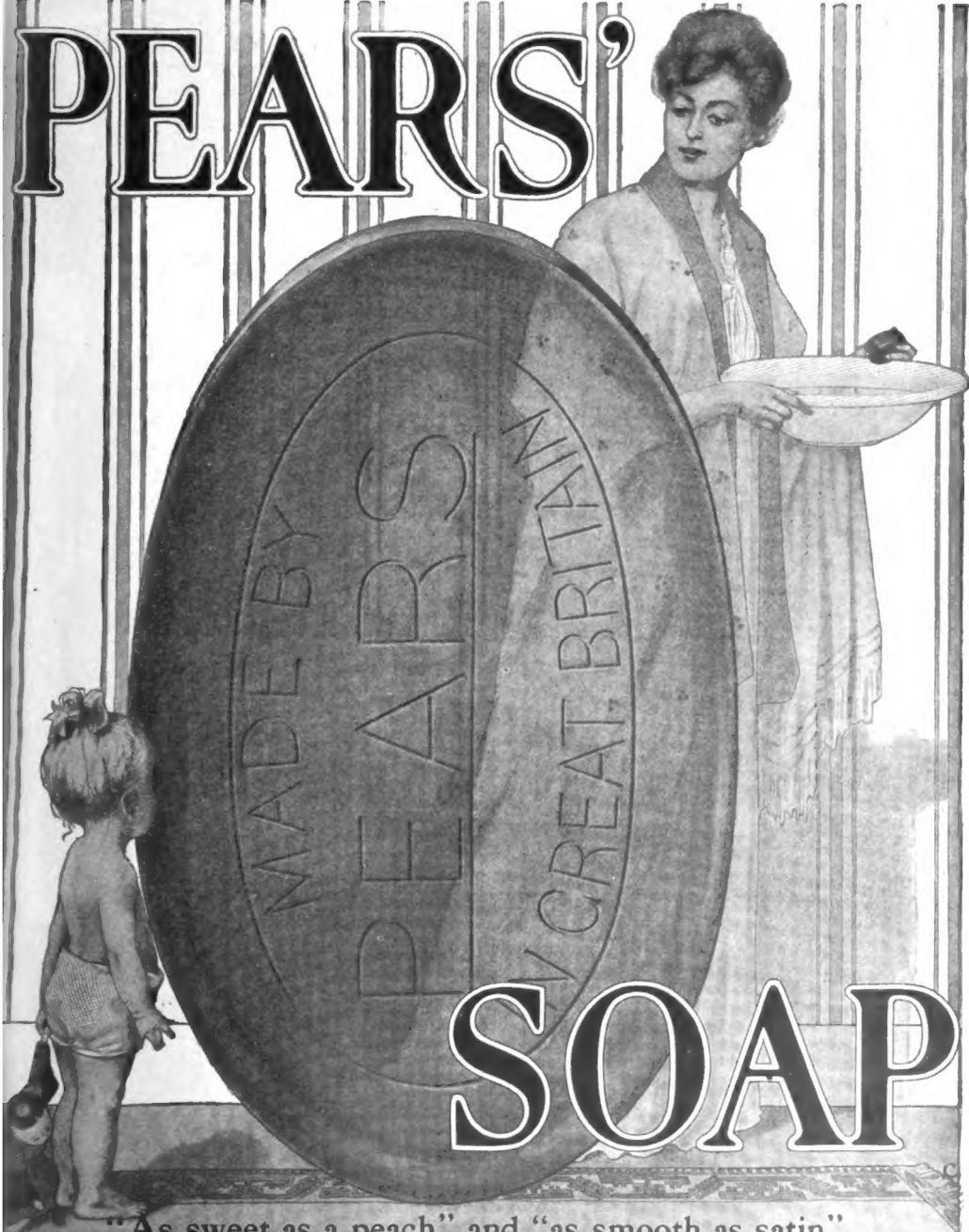
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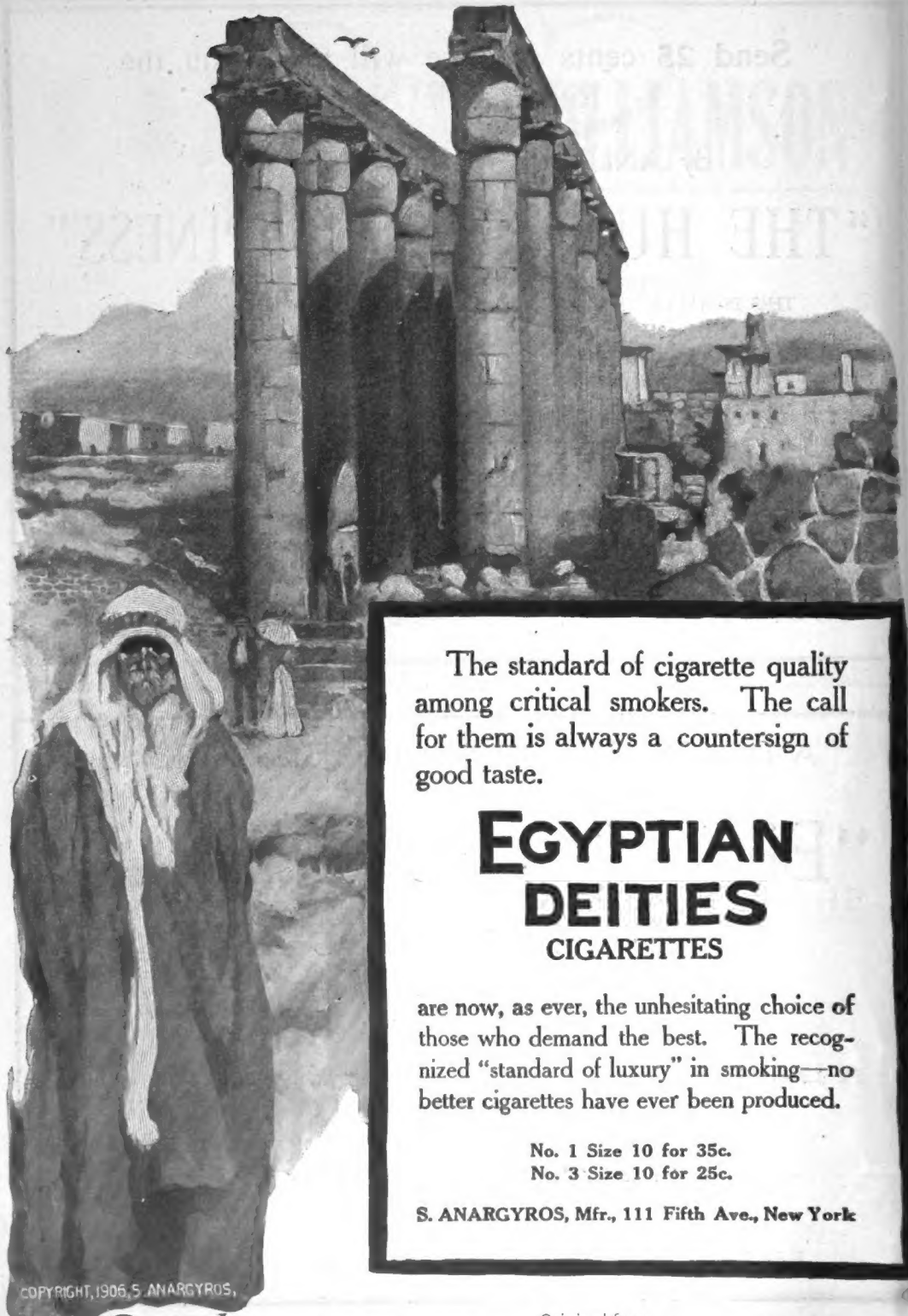
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# THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF  
CLEVERNESS

Vol. XXI

JANUARY, 1907

No. 1

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YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$2.50

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*Issued monthly by Ess Ess Publishing Company, 452 Fifth Avenue, New York*

### THE FEBRUARY "SMART SET"

*It is not often that an author writes a story containing a genuinely new idea. The hackneyed material of the past is used over and over again, retouched, revamped, remodeled. In the novel which will open the next issue, we believe that the author has struck a really fresh note in fiction, and succeeded in placing her characters in a situation at once real and original. Read*

### **"WINDS OF THE WORLD," By Gertrude Lynch**

*Following this dramatic story, there will be shorter tales in abundance. Notable among them is one by a new writer, Pearl Wilkins, entitled "An Oasis," a remarkably poetic piece of work. Other writers represented will be Margaret Potter, Seumas MacManus, Richard Butler Glaenzer, Anna A. Rogers, Owen Kildare, E. J. Rath, Fred-eric Taber Cooper, May Harris and Harriet Gay-lord. The essay will be by Clayton Hamilton, and deal with "Emphasis in the Drama."*

*Poems by John Vance Cheney, Ethel M. Kelley, Edwin L. Sabin, Emma A. Lente, Florence Wilkin-son, Charlotte Becker, and others, will appear.*

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# BROKEN STATUES

By Julien Gordon

(Mrs. Van Rensselaer Cruger)

Prie un peu pourtant pour le péché d'hier,  
Et donne ta main si faible et si forte,  
Voici venir l'heure où l'on voit moins clair.

## I

THE hero of novel or story when described as wicked is always the victim of malevolent destiny. His evil deeds are glossed over and illumined with roseate side lights, which cast upon them a romantic charity. He dances upon a stage bright with strange radiations which make him, if not admirable, at least pictorial. He is the pet of his coterie. He is permitted to play at cards, to bet heavily, but not to cheat; to leave his mother, but to love her; to drink deeply, but not to grow besotted; and if he seduce a woman, at least he does not calumniate her.

Stretched out at full length already in his deck-chair, though New York's port was still in view, Captain Du Nord, half-buried in his fur coat and cap, was indulging in a fit of unexpected retrospection, whose keynote was one of shame. Of his wickedness, this gray Autumnal morning, he himself had no shadow of doubt. The Celtic drop in his veins which he sometimes made the guest of his convenience, also at times, and particularly today, pricked up his conscience to peculiar heights of self-castigation.

As he glanced away from the rapidly retreating docks, with their network of masts and chimneys, to where the wide sea winds play over distant tracks toward whose mystery the big

ship was swiftly drifting, his meditations were not enlivening. A certain periodical, protruding at this moment from his pocket, devoted fully a page to his last deeds of darkness. He wondered dismally how many of his fellow-passengers had read the attack. They were few in number. The Winter exodus was already over. It was just possible that his might be the only copy of the accursed sheet in the first-class cabin. It was only "just out." Eight days would pass before the landing at Cherbourg or Southampton.

"There'll be other things in the next number about other blackguards," he murmured, "that'll make people drop this overboard."

He decided that his copy at least should have that toss over. He pulled it out of its refuge, tore it in small bits, and, drawing to the railing, threw them into the waves. He watched them for a while, rising and falling and drifting away, until they became tiny white spots on the dark brown backs of the billows.

In a general review of ill-spent youth there are usually a few data which start out and detach themselves with grave distinctness. They may even assume the majestic proportions of a warning, of one of those mile-stones on which is placed the cry of "Halt!" The path's downward slope is becoming steep, perilous; at its close hangs a misty obscurity as of some hidden precipice.

He remembered today, with poignant insistency, that he once had



cheated at cards. He had not been caught. What made the deed exquisitely horrid was that his colonel, to whom he was really attached, was the sufferer. That the sum he had himself gained was insignificant did not suffice to lull his remorse. It was the first and only time he had violated this particular law of manhood's honor. But the fact that this impulse of vanity to make a *coup* once possessed him—though hard up at the time, his crime was not entirely the result of greed—taught him what vanity coupled with weakness will lead to. He had sweated over it—as he would have expressed it—a good deal at the time, and always recalled it in moments of unusual gloom. If he had not forsaken his mother—which he could not do, having never known her—he held her memory in light respect. Just at present he was accused of abandoning the woman he had wildly loved and whom he had followed about the world in her vagabond flights for three years, master or slave alternately as her mood might dictate. His naturally passionate temper—veiled in a superficial good-humor which was effective—had burst forth to the eager satisfaction of a newspaper reporter who had poisoned his last twenty-four hours at the Waldorf-Astoria. What nuts and wine it was to torture him at last into the exclamation, "Say what you like, she's an adventuress!"

Immediately after the words were out he regretted them, not through any consideration for the lady, but through consideration for himself, and, in the dining-room, he later confided to his friend, Spofford Drake, the full measure of his indiscretion.

"Such a thing may go down in other countries, old boy," said Drake, "but it'll hurt you here. You've dished yourself. We Americans never go back on a woman—in words, at any rate—and if we do, we get kicked. Really now, I'm sorry, you know. I guess you had better trek. Get across before the yellows have you."

He had taken his friend's advice, hurriedly tossed his togs into his valises,

and—sailed. "There are a thousand disagreeable things to do and only one or two pleasant ones," he thought to himself. "I'll have time enough to decide my next move on the steamer."

Spofford Drake was *persona grata* in households where—had he remained in America—Du Nord himself wished to penetrate. He was fond of luxurious surroundings, handsome women and bridge whist, and he expected Drake to introduce him to some of his friends. Drake was kindly disposed and, if not to the manor born, competent, through a shrewd intelligence and keen discernment, to fathom the requirements of a certain set. If Drake said he had "dished himself" it must be final.

"You see," Drake went on, helping himself to an olive, "you're not an English peer nor a Russian grand duke, and a great deal more is expected of you. I don't say but what your looks would carry you anywhere, make impression."

"Yes, I see, old man." The encomium had fallen short of its consoling mission.

"Had you letters?"

"I have two or three," and he mentioned to whom.

"Those are strong names. Mrs. Gresham is in England now, and Mrs. Heathcote's in black for her husband. Van De Water is up at the hospital with appendicitis, and Frank Pierce isn't yet out from his motor smash."

"I'm off."

"It's the better. I'll join you in Egypt."

Then they fell to talking of Alaska, which the captain had lately explored, with honorable adventures, some quite probable, and all at least interesting. Physical courage was one of his indisputable virtues, if of moral fortitude he possessed but little. His animal instincts were intact.

He went back now to his lounging position and tried to divert unpleasant thought.

"They're a filthy lot," he murmured to himself, as he lolled, watching his fellow-passengers, who, full of the

agitations of departure, some still tearful from sentimental partings, were aimlessly moving hither and thither, among baskets of fruit, boxes of roses, shawl-straps, hampers, bundles, boxes of biscuits, cakes and lollipops. The stewards were busy among these, separating and conveying them to their respective cabins. The adjective did not fit. The voyagers were far from filthy. They were eminently decent, of neat, middle-class aspect and cleanliness of person.

But his point of view was momentarily jaundiced. He had hardly thus relieved his irritation, however, when it was given the lie. An exceedingly beautiful young woman, charmingly dressed, swept past him. She called a passing sailor, asking for a deck-chair.

"You can bring two," she said, "and I'll give the steward our names. There's another lady."

Captain Du Nord could not do less than get up and offer her his seat while she waited. He touched his cap as she stood, irresolute, beside him.

"Will you accept mine until the fellow returns?" he said, staggering a little with a sudden lunge of the vessel.

"Thanks," she said, laughing, "I think I'll have to. It's beginning to roll awfully and I haven't my sea legs on yet." Then, after a few words as to weather and prospects of the trip, "I wish you would get me the passenger-list," she said to him in that tone of easy command of the American woman accustomed to male homage.

He obeyed, but without alacrity, and she was a little disappointed that he sent it to her by a cabin-boy and did not return himself.

Of Mrs. Severyn's comeliness there could be but one opinion. The bony structure of her face had the regularity of a Clytie's. She had an abundance of pale, soft hair, the complexion of a baby, a pair of dark eyes under curling lashes, which glowed like midnight forges, but were nevertheless cold, eyebrows cleanly drawn. Her small mouth, which opened upon teeth of an almost unnatural evenness and whiteness, in-

telligent and mocking, was her only feature open to criticism. Its scarlet line was almost too thin for perfect beauty, suggesting a hardness whose cruelty would lie in passivity, not in passion. She was of middle height, thin and animated. Her feet and hands were long and fine. She wore a red coat over a dark gown, which tightly accentuated her slimness. A great black hat, tilted over her forehead, threw, with its crown of feathers, the upper part of her brow into shadow. She had been married, had borne a child, had gone through the ordeal of divorce, and at twenty-seven was once more alone. Her child's death, her separation from her husband, seemed to have left no mark upon a face whose expression was one of inscrutable calm. Her voice, slightly nasal, strong in its reverberation on the letter "r," betokened her Western origin. It was, withal, agreeable enough. She came, in fact, from a great centre of Occidental civilization.

Her own chair arrived and she swung herself out of the captain's and proceeded, after the manner of seafarers two hours out, to scan the list of names of the *Franconia's* human freight.

She was still thus occupied when "the other lady" heralded to the sailor appeared upon the scene.

## II

THIS was a tallish person, half-hidden under a *motif* veil, whose ends the breeze blew about the little toque of fur that rested on her dusky hair. A fur-lined coat disclosed a figure one guessed supple and elegant. She was one of those women one always turns to look at, a tribute to dominant personality. Mrs. Illian's had once been a Hebe bloom, but the color which fluctuated in her cheeks was now delicate and rare. There were moments when she was quite pale. Her countenance was not free, as was Mrs. Severyn's, of the tokens of tears or the lines of laughter. The corners of her sensitive lip had a droop, half-mischievous, half-

melancholy. A man had once said of her smile, "It illumines the world." Its bitter-sweetness was still enigmatic to a number of gentlemen whom she persisted in treating as good comrades, and not as lovers. She was wearing their violets and carrying their lilies as she ensconced herself by the side of her friend. Her maid followed her with wraps and cushions, and they were soon chatting, side by side, in that sheltered corner of the deck the captain had thoughtfully selected for himself.

These two had been friends only for a week—one from the West, the other from Washington, where she had found a temporary domicile in a secluded corner of a city which charmed her fancy.

She and Mrs. Severyn—having been presented to each other by a mutual acquaintance in the corridor of the same hotel in New York—had listened to the music together a couple of evenings. Mrs. Illian had resolutely refused the importunities of her relatives and friends to stop in their houses and grace their dinner parties. She was a New Yorker.

"I'm a poor sailor," she explained, "and I want to rest before I embark. So let me be quiet, my dears, and when I come back you will see only too much of me. I shall have some decent clothes then and shall want to show them off to you all."

So she and Mrs. Severyn had struck up an intimacy which left social obligations out of the question; for the latter was a stranger in the city where Mrs. Illian—Imogen Illian—was so well known. Tragic circumstances, which have nothing to do with this story, had decided her to travel. For some years her existence had been a wandering one.

"Well, dear lady, what are you absorbed in?" she cried, settling her draperies.

"Mrs. Hauch, child and nurse; Mrs. Lichtenstein; Miss Ackie; Mr. and Mrs. Cohen; Mr. Carl Fritz; Mr. Hugo Fritz; Mrs. Pabst; Miss Blumn.' Oh, Lord! All Jewry is let loose. All the com-

mercial travelers and perambulating milliners are with us."

"Who cares? We shall be all the quieter. I always avoid the *bravura* seasons."

"I'd have liked to see some of the smart people. You, who are one of them, must pardon a provincial."

"Pshaw!"

"Mr. and Mrs. Solomon, two children and nurse; Mr.——"

Mrs. Illian raised her hands to her ears. "Spare me!"

"Well, you see, I am looking for a pearl among this rubbish, for," and she lowered her voice to a whisper, "there is a pearl."

"Where?"

"There is a pearl and it is a masculine one, and in all its radiance it has shone on me."

"Really! Oh, then, I am lost. You will get up a flirtation and I'll be left to myself."

"That's probable! I'm in no mood for flirtation."

"I am sorry to hear that. When a woman abjures flirtation she takes to gluttony. It's harder on the figure, besides being one of the seven deadly sins."

"Well, then, I'll flirt to please you, discreetly, once a year, just to keep in shape. But, seriously, I am going to join my mother in Paris, to study art and improve my French; to get my complexion in order—one has, of course, to go to a beauty specialist in Paris—and to give a wide berth to all complications. But you——"

"At twenty-seven, my dear—I think you said that was your age—one has hardly squared accounts with life. I also think at that tender age one's complexion can be left alone. I remember when I was twenty-seven I thought that all was over—that I had finished—later I found out my mistake. When you get to my age it will be time enough to abjure the demands of ambition and the dreams of love."

"Have you?"

"Yes."

"Since when?"

"There is, in fact, an exact hour and date."

"Which you will not divulge?"

"Dates are uninteresting."

"Yours would not be. You are the one human being I have longed to meet for years. My present luck frightens me."

"The slave's got but one master, and he may be kind; but love is a tyrant that is bound to make us miserable, while ambition—bahl!—has exactly as many masters as can help it gain its ends. But why did you want to meet me, dear?"

"I have heard you much discussed."

"That is over."

"No, it isn't. It goes on."

"And am I as you expected?"

"Only in one point—largeness. I felt you were a big person."

"How do you know what I am? We are only in the delicious stages of preliminary friendship, where all is discovery and weaknesses are not yet apparent—the sweetest stage of all intercourse." Mrs. Illian sighed. "Yes, the second stage is the danger. One sees the flaws, and habit and affection are not yet strong enough to make us lenient. How many intimacies crumble in that second stage! Once through that, they're safe, unless . . ."

"Unless jealousy of sex comes in?"

"That," said Mrs. Illian, "between you and me, my dear girl, would be quite impossible. I should abdicate before even attempting rivalry."

Her words were sincere. She already felt a certain humiliation before youth, that dread of the years which paralyzes. The attitude which commands admiration was passed.

"I should be sorry to enter the ring with you, Mrs. Illian; I have such an absolute certainty I should get worsted."

"We are polite, are we not?" said Mrs. Illian, laughing, "and in the meanwhile you are neglecting your pearl."

"Here he is!"

Mrs. Severyn's gloved finger indicated a name on the ship's list—Captain Roy Du Nord.

"Are you sure?"

"Sure. He looks it. It isn't bad, you know; it's a nice sort of name."

"I wonder if he's related to Lord Du Nord?"

"I suppose you know a lot of those people?"

"Some of them," said Mrs. Illian, smiling. "I am cosmopolitan."

"It must be fun, that English life. I have seen so little."

"It is all before you."

"Here he comes. Hush!"

"If you want him, bully him, my dear. Delicate measures are lost on these British."

### III

THOSE who feel called upon to spit upon others and insult them have but mediocre powers of self-defense. Courtesy can in itself be of a character to distance the intruder. Such courtesy was Mrs. Illian's.

Her prophecy that Mrs. Severyn and "the pearl" would flirt seemed fulfilled during the next two days, for he became discreetly attentive and the lady sufficiently fluttered. His method was so un-American that it proved piquant to the spoiled beauty, accustomed to the slavish attentions of her Western town. His long absences, his changing moods, kept up a certain absorbed wonder as to what he would do next. It was always the unexpected. For the first time in her experience she had met her match.

In the meantime Mrs. Illian relegated the handsome soldier to a remoteness whose frigid zone he did not dare to penetrate. Her perfect civility seemed to raise a wall of ice between them. An open snub is an invitation to combat. An adversary gains importance. For some reason best known to herself Mrs. Illian did not intend that the captain should become important. Did her beauty, a little bruised with life, shrink sensitively at the splendor of Eileen Severyn's freshness? If her pride intuitively stifled any rivalry between them, who shall say? Women of her type know how

to guard their secrets. The battle to keep up with youth was not to her taste. "There are struggles which, begun in pluck, end in folly. It is wise to recognize when one is beaten. I will, at least, never be hissed from the stage," she thought. The tragedy of the years lies only in their non-acceptance.

A *succès d'estime* she felt was not her rôle. She so arranged it that even when the three were stretched side by side in their long deck-chairs she could ostracize the others to their tête-à-tête. She rarely joined them in their talk, was invariably engrossed in a book or magazine, and when her eyes grew weary of the printed page they wandered to the mauve and amber-tinted sky, as if wholly absorbed in some engrossing vision. What flowers of dream did they evoke from this Winter of Northern seas? Sometimes the captain wanted to ask, as he looked at her furtively across Mrs. Severyn's fur-covered knees. But he did not dare.

When they paced the decks, which they did for hours, Mrs. Severyn often talked to him of Mrs. Illian, with the frank admiration of woman for woman. He expressed nothing. Once when they came back they found her writing letters.

"I am thanking my friends for my bouquets," she said. "I was too tired to mail a word by the pilot. I am trying not to tell the poor ones I was 'touched.' I was far more touched by the gifts of the rich ones. They are so much rarer."

"That's clever, you know," murmured Roy Du Nord. "You Americans are awfully clever."

"It is expected of us," said Mrs. Illian satirically.

They fell to discussing a downfallen politician.

"All may climb," she said, "but a lost success is difficult to regain. If it is not immediately regained, it is gone."

"He was a great fellow," said Du Nord.

"Oh, broken columns and statues always look tall."

"Dear me, how you do bury the poor chap! Eh?"

She got up and left them, saying she must find her maid.

"Our precious handmaidens," called out Mrs. Severyn after her, "are behind the smokestacks, very green about the gills. I have not seen Marie since this morning."

A lady in a sable cape, with a very large diamond fastening her veil, turned and said, "Well, now, I guess they ain't much use. We're all in the same box. Mine's no good. There's not life enough on this ship for her. She's crazy on the theatres. She'd work like a nigger if only she can run out at night. There's nowhere to run to here. She can't do my hair, and what's more, she won't. I ain't been undulated since I came on board. And she ain't sick, nor am I, and there ain't no excuse. I ain't religious or sentimental, and I'm about sick of her pranks." She settled herself back with a jerk, and the sables and the diamond trembled with unspent energies. A pot-bellied brewer, her husband, in a flat cap and low collar, over which hung three layers of fatty degeneration, came up, and she continued to pour her litany into his ear.

Du Nord was eclipsed in laughter and Mrs. Severyn was choking.

"Well, now, mother," they heard him say, "you can't send her off in mid-sea, now, can you?" A torrent of words drowned his feeble protest of perturbing peace.

"Why don't you go and console that disconsolate widow over there?" Eileen said to him. "Tuck her up and make her comfy. She's pretty and lonely and doesn't seem to have any maid to fret her."

"She's not disconsolate," said Du Nord, "in spite of her yards of crêpe. It's harder to tackle cheery mourners than broken-up ones, don't you know? One doesn't know exactly what to say. I gave it up."

"Were you ever at a loss?"

"Oh, don't chaff. I have no show with you and your friend."

"What has become of her?"



"How can I tell? She flies at my approach."

"I find her so interesting—one of those queer natures that laugh today at yesterday's agonies. We think them light, but they sometimes have tragic souls."

"Fancy!"

"Your reply is not adequate."

"You Americans use such long words."

"And you Englishmen have such long legs."

"She's very exclusive, isn't she?"

"It's no compliment to be admitted to the houses or the friendships of those who aren't."

"It's a bit frightening, you know."

"Don't you find her very lovely?"

"I have hardly had a square look at her," he said vaguely.

The unconscious topic of this conversation had settled herself for a while near the maids. She was talking with a group of simple people—an Irish mother and her two pale-cheeked daughters—with the apologetic awkwardness of a cultivated intellect when addressing ignorance. They thought her a great lady, and not in the least proud.

A consumptive Canadian, in angora mittens and a respirator, was being dragged hither and thither by a young wife with large feet and a shock of nervous red hair. It surrounded her mobile, freckled face with its sharp halo, from under her tam-o'-shanter. Her Scotch golf cape flew in the wind behind her in persistent rebellion. Mrs. Illian left her Irish friends and helped the girl deftly to settle her wrap, saying a kindly word to the sick man as she passed.

"We're going to Egypt," said the girl. "He will breathe better there. He has been awfully ill. Nova Scotia is hard on him in the Winters."

Mrs. Illian was sympathetic, asked some questions and gave advice.

"Don't stop in Cairo; get rooms in the country. You will be more quiet, with lighter air."

When she returned she was surprised to find Eileen alone.

"What! has the captain flown?"

She shrugged. "That's what he says you do when he arrives."

"He flatters himself. He doesn't disturb me in the least."

"Why do you dislike him so much? Don't you think him distinguished?"

"No."

"What's wrong?"

"One can't explain."

"Do you distrust him?"

"Don't ask me that."

"Why?"

"Here comes some sweet frothy refreshment. Don't take too much."

"In other words, don't get drunk on lemonade. It isn't worth while. Is your remark a slur on the captain? Am I, do you think, in danger of getting drunk on lemonade?"

"You are not easily moved and I think he is awfully good-looking."

"But common?"

"Oh, no! not that—there is an abyss between common and distinguished."

"I suppose we all seem common near you. I feel myself so. As to Captain Du Nord, he says you frighten him half to death." She was nettled.

"I am the first woman that ever did, then, you sweet goose."

"What influence you must have had over men! And I won't speak in the past tense, either."

"Women have only the second in which a man loves them. What they make of that creates the legend of their power. It amounts to little."

"I guess you make a lot of that moment, then. You are delicate and witty. You would run the polished blade right through the creature—kill him straight and dead." The red line of Eileen's mouth curved as if with irritation.

"My child, I have no such skill," said Mrs. Illian. "I am an impotent, trembling, vanquished woman. Do not make fun of me."

Mrs. Severyn turned and looked at her narrowly out of her glowing, cold eyes. "You are a riddle," she said.

## IV

CAPTAIN DU NORD was still in the clutches of suffering. He hated suffering. It was novel to his constitution. He had not the strength to convert it into a counsel of discipline. Oddly enough, Mrs. Illian's cool airs of superiority, her evident disposition to avoid him, added to his torments. "She knows," he thought. Then again her apparent encouragement of his civilities to the younger woman seemed to rob her poise of any sinister intention.

"If she knew, she would put the other one on the scent. That sort of woman has *esprit de corps*."

He found himself, while indulging in banal gallantry with Eileen, constantly speculating as to Mrs. Illian's opinion of him. These speculations, on the fourth day out, had become an obsession. It was very odd.

"We'll be in in four days more," he thought; "it's a splendid trip and we'll get there on Saturday. If she didn't know, I had this one chance, just this one, and I am losing it. The moment she gets to London the dogs will be let loose on me. I had eight days and I have thrown away half of them. I do not know what it is I want of her. Why should I care *what* she thinks? But I do. The rushlight likes me. She's prettier and younger, too; but the star won't touch me, and I'm one of the cursed sort who always wanted the star while my feet stood in the mud. That's why I have sunk so in the socket. Star gazing."

Forceful desire is stronger than denial. His moment was to arrive.

He had neglected Eileen all the morning. He found her walking the deck.

"Who are those odd-looking girls in soiled blue frocks you were speaking to at luncheon?" he asked.

"The Misses Dabster. They are English girls living in Denver. They tell me they are cousins of Lord Dabster and they are going out to be presented by Lady Dabster."

"His title must be a disputed one; never heard of them."

"I'll tell them what you say."

"Do."

"By the way, what are you to the Du Nord?"

The captain hesitated a moment. He did not care for family inquiries. "An unloved nephew," he finally answered.

"Why unloved?" She could barely conceal her devouring curiosity concerning him.

"Well," he said ruefully, "I got into a scrape, lately. When a man doesn't go after the right woman the wrong woman goes after him. That's been my case, I'm afraid. There's no use hoisting people into the saddle who can't ride. My uncle has financed me once or twice and I've always gone to pot directly and made a silly ass of myself. He thinks it tiresome. See?"

He spoke with the frankness to which beings apt at subterfuge occasionally treat themselves. Englishmen, at best, are poor actors. Carelessness as to whether one pleases or not is an indubitable aid to candor.

"Yes, I see," said Eileen. "When people insist on drowning we can't help them; all we can do is to shake them off and swim for life. Your uncle's cut loose?"

"Yes; rather shabby of him, wasn't it? He's got a pile, as you say in the States."

"As you say that we say. But why do you tell me all this? If you can't take care of your reputation, who will take care of it for you? The wrong woman?" She spoke lightly, but there was an unexplained pang at her heart.

"My reputation? Oh, Lord!" said the captain. He was determined to know how much they had heard.

"Why—is it so bad?" She spoke ingenuously. He was reassured. A weight seemed lifted from him. "It's all right," he thought, "I've got my four days." He laughed like a boy, showing his fine teeth under his brushed-up brown mustache. His hair, darker and curly, lay close to his straight, clean-cut brows. His perfect nose, his full, moist lips, the amorous dimple in his strong, round chin,

his thin, tanned cheeks, the strength of his sloping shoulders, the elegance of his gesture and his walk, filled the young woman with a sort of animal joy in mere physical beauty. She hardly waited for his reply, so sweet did life seem to her in that moment, shaken by that laugh of his.

"I, too, was once being drowned, and—I divorced. Your uncle is right. One must protect oneself."

"I say, though, don't you think the women are going it a little strong in the States?"

They had walked along and came to a standstill before Mrs. Illian, who was reclining, as usual, a book in her hands.

"Captain Du Nord does not approve of divorce," Eileen said, with a defiant tremor in her voice. "He is shocked to find I belong to the flock. Bourget says that the country where divorce exists—have you seen his latest book?—is full of meanness, criminals, degenerates and suicides. What do *you* think, Mrs. Illian?"

"I approve of divorce."

"You're awfully advanced, you know," said Du Nord.

"Italy and Spain are not superior, morally, to the United States, do you think, Captain Du Nord?"

"I don't know. I mean, I never really thought about it," he stammered.

"Bourget says," went on Eileen, who seemed pleasurably excited, "that the individual must be sacrificed to the many."

"It is the individual that makes the many," said Mrs. Illian. "I have just re-read 'Angelo,' to prepare myself for Sarah's revival of the romantic in Paris, and I see why we are where we are."

"Those Italian chaps were pretty rough on the women," said the captain, "making them drink poison and all that if they so much as winked at another fellow. I suppose you mean we're in the reaction?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm sleepy and it is getting quite black. We'll have to talk it out later. Ta-ta!" And Eileen hailed

Marie, who was staggering past, and took her arm to the cabin door.

So they were alone—at last.

The vicinity embarrassed him. She differed from any woman he had met. Some secret spiritual grace in her stirred his own materialism.

## V

"I HAD my fortune told today," he said, regaining his courage and holding out his palm, as he threw himself on the chair by her side, after a moment's poignant pause. "The girl's very clever. She must tell yours."

"My fortune is told," said Mrs. Illian.

"What was it?" He leaned toward her, speaking in a voice she did not recognize. He seemed quite another man, eager, earnest.

"Show not your soul too bare,' some sage has said," she smiled.

"That's just what I'm wanting to do—lay my soul bare—to you."

"To me?"

"Yes, to you—to yours. My God! How glad I am to be alone with you!"

"Your tête-à-têtes with Mrs. Severyn seemed sufficiently fruitful. Why in the world should you desire one with me?" she replied a little haughtily.

*"Toi si grave avec tes yeux sages,  
Et moi dont l'âme fut si vile,"*

he murmured. "I don't wonder you ask."

A faint flush rose to Mrs. Illian's cheeks, that the misty night had paled. She turned for the first time upon him those far-seeing eyes of hers. They met his fully. A flash of sympathy shot between them.

"What a beautiful darling you must have been when a child," she said softly, and continued to gaze at him, her glance seeming to say, "And are yet."

It was his turn to flush; half in vanity, which was his salient trait, and half from a higher instinct.

"One isn't afraid of danger, but always of being laughed at," he said.

"Then have no fear."

"You're a wonderful sort of woman, you know!" But she had taken her-

self back already and ignored his exclamation.

"Shall you stop in England when you land? I hate it. Everything in England seems to crouch. I get crouching, too. I want to go to the mountains somewhere, though it is not the season. I don't care for the gymnastics of altitudes, as you British do. I don't want lines and measurements. I want to look up and breathe them. I think I'll try the Pyrenees; it's warm down there."

"That's what you make a chap feel. You make him want to look up, and . . ."

But she interrupted him. "What was your fortune?" she asked.

"Tell me first of yours, since it is lived."

"Ah," she said, "don't ask my biography. To tell or write it would break my heart."

"Dear me," said the captain, "Mrs. Severyn says you are no end of a success, that you compose music, poetry and all that sort of thing, but that you are shy about it and sign another name, and have just thought it enough to be called smart. It isn't easy, is it, to be both clever and smart?"

She smiled. "My star was a vacillating one. Not like our President's, which knows no turnings. It was his star in poor, dear McKinley's stomach, not the bullet and the last piece of toast, which killed. It was the whisk of the comet's tail."

"He has luck, you know."

"Or character. But, after all, character, too, is fate."

*"A qui le dites vous?"*

"How do you speak French so well? I knew you an adept when you quoted those two lines of verse."

She had heard them, then.

"It was whipped into me at a French school where I put in four boring years. You're a widow, aren't you?"

"My husband is dead." Then, after a moment's silence, "Are you still in the army?" she asked.

"No, I resigned. Oh, I didn't get kicked out. Not that. Whatever you hear, remember I did fight. I can

fight. I got winged at Ladysmith. It hurts yet when it's damp." He raised an arm and worked his fingers about. "I did go to India in the ranks and worked up. Hell it was; but I am not a coward—not in battle, at least." This incoherent tirade seemed to relieve him.

"Why do you tell me all this?" She almost repeated Eileen's words. But the ample gravity of his boyish outpouring had been for her, not for Mrs. Severyn.

"I don't know, I'm sure. You could be a sort of conscience to a chap. You don't need a star; you are one. You're not angry, are you?"

Angry? Schumann's tearful philosophy, that she so adored, had never moved her more than this man's curious naïveté. It acted upon her like music. It brought the lump into the throat. "He is horribly dangerous," she thought, with a fear for Eileen, and a sense that to listen to him further was somehow disloyal. She felt like an actress called upon unexpectedly to play some new and untried rôle.

As she lay an hour later—it was ten o'clock—in her berth, a bit of lace across her forehead and a swan's-down quilt over her feet, Eileen appeared at the cabin door. She was in a long, pale peignoir, her silky hair caught in a great mass on the top of her head. There were hectic spots of color in her cheeks.

"What a beauty you are like that," said Mrs. Illian.

"I brought you the book."

"What book?"

"Bourget on Divorce. Do I tire you? Must I go at once?"

"Why, no, my dear. I am wide awake. Sit here on this little stool—so—near me. You are such a plucky sailor. You don't need to fuss and coddle as I do."

The sea was calm. A moist moon now and then looked through the porthole. Eileen folded herself up on the camp-chair and clasped her hands about her knees.

"You will find the book worth

reading. He is thoughtful, always, though he gives no new light. Men make laws for men. Priests, too, are men. They say, 'Forgive the faithless husband; return to him; bear his children.' In France infidelity is a minor offense. The complaisant husband is ridiculed, vilified. The complaisant wife is admired. There a man goes into a house and ruins the wife. He casts her off and marries, the next year, some lovely rich girl of eighteen. With us, he gets the woman he has compromised divorced, takes her by the hand, protects and marries her. Which is the higher standard? I don't see what any of us can do but the best for ourselves, according to our own lights. There are other things, besides infidelity, which degrade and stifle."

"Infidelity remains the most dreadful, because it awakens up the terrible passion."

"You mean jealousy?"

"That life of suspicion, of debasement—it isn't worth living. I'd deliver any woman or man from its bondage if I could."

"There are unreasonable jealousies, I suppose."

"No doubt. I would advise persons of that temperament to keep clear of love. One gets on without it."

"Have you loved?"

"Oh, yes. Very naturally, elementally, jealously, and all the rest of it. If I thought it might come again I'd jump into the sea."

"I sometimes doubt if I ever have. My temperament is chilly; perhaps I never shall."

"Poor child. Don't be sure."

"If you were free, then, and you cared . . . ?"

"Why didn't we get married? Life is not so simple as that. The only man I have loved since I was what is called 'free'—the heart is always that—was not. There were shackles on his hands, no matter of what sort. It was short, a stormy attachment, a tragic mistake. He had the wayward temperament of genius. We tortured each other for a time. Our natures were antagonistic. His to mine, at

least. Then I cut loose. I could not stand the pain of it. We had frightful misunderstandings. They wore me out. I tried to make concessions, but the concessions of dominant characters are futile. Proud people can never cringe to advantage; that is why pride is such a handicap in life. The proud lack flexibility and only invite resentment. So—I gave him up. He was weaker or stronger, would have dragged on with it—heaven knows where. But I was decided—I let him go."

"How interesting!"

"He was that—a *charmeur*, full of power, wit, eloquence. We met at a dinner party, quite casually. He was not an American."

"No doubt his intellect captivated yours—two eagles."

"Oh, not at all. I fell a victim to his voice and his back hair, and he liked the way I dressed."

Eileen laughed. "And for that, a lot of agony!"

"It doesn't pay."

"No."

"Still up, ladies, like midnight conspirators?" The *Franconia's* captain loomed at the door.

"Why, captain! What are you about in these regions?"

"Called down to a chap who's got indigestion and thinks he's going to kick the bucket. He wants to confide his papers to my care. He sat up too late listening to Captain Du Nord's Alaskan stories—amusing fellow."

"Who is Captain Du Nord?" asked Eileen boldly.

"Madam, *you* ought to know. Pulls a pretty long bow, I fancy. Quite a bunch of stories."

"What impertinence!" said Eileen, as the ship's commander walked off. "It takes an Englishman to be so rude."

"Come, now, little one, you did deserve it, you know. You aren't logical."

"Everybody seems against him."

"Shall I warn her further?" thought Mrs. Illian. But a singular disinclination to disparage Du Nord had



taken possession of her, and they parted with no additional comment.

"After all, what do I know of the man?" she said to herself, as she tossed in her berth to a restless sleep.

## VI

At Cherbourg Mrs. Severyn landed. We learn life as we do Greek art, through mutilated models; as Mrs. Illian had said, broken statues. Our best gifts come to us disfigured.

Eileen's mother did not find in her child's embrace all the anticipated rapture. She thought her unresponsive. The poor lady, who had stood with ice-cold feet and a snuffling catarrh for hours in the drizzling dampness, was somewhat disconcerted and aggrieved.

"She doesn't seem half glad to be with me," she thought. "How heartless children can be! She seems to be fretting more about her boxes than at all this exposure that I've gone through. I am quite sure my feet will never be dry again."

"I wish, Eileen, that you would stop craning your neck up that gang-plank and tell me at once if you mean to stop at Cherbourg to breakfast, or take the special on to Paris. I have a telegram to get off," she said, a trifle crossly.

But the craning of Eileen's slender throat was not after her luggage. Last evening, with a cordial hand-clasp, Roy Du Nord had promised to be on hand—at dawn, for it was but this—and see her landed. She had kissed Mrs. Illian in her state-room, and now she was permitted to tumble into the maternal arms, alone; for the handsome soldier had not disturbed himself. The word selfish is hardly accurate in defining failure to keep a tryst which ardent friendship would find it impossible to break. Neglect is hardly affront, but it is more distressing. It holds an element of perplexity.

Her resentment was all the more poignant that it sprang from the most unflattering surmises. All the way to

Paris—they did not stop at Cherbourg—she was distraught and angry and barely replied to her mother's loving queries. Eileen's mind was not above facts, as is the case with many persons. It gave out no comforting coddlings. She was not one of those women who delude themselves into mistaking a slight for a compliment.

We never forget the man who did not see us off.

And Roy Du Nord, who might have been dismissed from out her thought in a half-hour, remained to sting her memory through days of wounded pride. By the time she reached the French capital she had concluded he was a monster. "How one would hate him if one loved him!" she thought. And under all there rankled a dark, hardly acknowledged surmise. Why was Mrs. Illian suddenly so reserved about him, so ill at ease? Was it possible that there was something between them—that she was the mere cat's-paw of these two people of the world? The idea, persistently recurrent, gave the last touch to her discomfiture.

When Southampton was reached Du Nord did not treat Mrs. Illian in the same fashion. To be sure, as he himself was landing, he could not very well stop in his berth. He was on hand, fresh and rosy, shaved and elegant. He was not only on hand, but extremely devoted and useful. He insisted upon relieving Mrs. Illian's maid of a portmanteau under which she was tottering. The lady herself, the maid, the portmanteau and the captain, the consumptive Canadian and his red-haired wife, were all ensconced in a carriage of the London special.

Alas for human aspirations and their fulfillment! The four days in which he had so hoped to make headway in Mrs. Illian's good graces were over. The haven was nigh, and in this last moment no further confidences were made. And he had so much to tell her! He had wasted hours in the smoking-room, weaving his tales of Northwestern adventure, mockingly

asking himself, as he talked to his good-natured audience, if he was their dupe or they his. He could hardly have told in the end where reality ended and fiction began. As to another tête-à-tête with Mrs. Illian, he found it impossible. She tacitly avoided him, and his left-over moments had still been spent philandering in the company of her less discouraging companion.

Once out of the train he begged Mrs. Illian to allow him, when she reached London, to get a trap for her and see to her boxes. Was she going to the Carlton, perhaps? That was his own destination. She informed him frostily that she was to stop with friends, and that they would no doubt meet her at Waterloo Station. Their welcoming letters had arrived at Plymouth. They were, in fact, awaiting her; a Sir Charles and Lady Spark, and another man, an American, with a large bouquet. Du Nord, however, valorously clung to her. He could not believe she would not ask him to call; that she would shake him off like this. Had he not consecrated most of the seven or eight days to the service of these women? Was it possible she intended to push him off, without a word, into the cold of an eternal farewell? His insistence of giving help was almost febrile. Sir Charles's frigid glare and the American friend's assiduities did not serve to disconcert him. By-and-bye, however, the party got itself into two cabs and he stood, hat in hand, at the door of the one in which Mrs. Illian was ensconced.

She gave him, for just one moment, a gloved hand.

"Good-bye," she said, smiling.

"Good-bye. Good luck to you." His fingers crisped a moment upon hers. The door was closed. The cab rattled out of the dim vault; not, however, before she had seen the trembling of his pale lips. The blow had been sharp. Du Nord, left shivering in his boreal solitude, felt for a moment all the bleak emptiness of life.

"Your fellow-passenger looks quite upset," said Lady Spark.

The next day Mrs. Illian was bidden to breakfast with friends at Willis's. There were present the Sparks, the American friend, the niece of a monarch's favorite who was sporty and smart and whom they called Sally—her name was Mrs. Ford—her husband, who was less so; an M.P., a Secretary for somewhere, young Lord Burton and a lady of the *haute juiverie*, who was petted by a certain clique for the money she spent upon them. She wore a yellow hat, green velvet jacket and an ermine cape, a combination which Mrs. Illian languidly concluded to be distressingly unbecoming. She, Mrs. Venner, talked incessantly in a high key of an entertainment she had lately given, and the difficulty she had found in keeping it small. This gave her facile opportunity, touched by incentive, of loudly airing the names of her desirable acquaintances, and Mrs. Illian, frozen into silence, marveled that anyone so vulgar could buy her way even into London drawing-rooms, whose catholicity has become traditional.

"Aristotle calls ancient riches aristocracy," whispered the Secretary from somewhere, who bore a great name, into her ear. "What do you say of our 'new'?"

"That it is far worse than ours," she answered, laughing. "You beat New York and Newport quite out of sight. I hadn't really thought it would be quite so bad as this." By-and-bye, she determined to ask the question which was buzzing in her brain.

She would never see him again. Her unexplained attitude had settled that, and she would probably not speak his name forever. But this once she would take her chance and—know. Here was her chance—an excellent one, a motley company, no particular coterie, but all people competent to judge of a man's place and repute. When the invading Mrs. Venner was for a moment occupied with chicken pâté, Mrs. Illian threw across the table—not without a certain tremor—the name of Captain Du Nord. "He was

on the ship. Do you know him?" she asked Lord Burton casually.

"Do you mean Roy?"

"Yes. Roy Du Nord. That was the name—er—on the list—the name he answered to."

"He's a rum 'un. In horrid odor with his own people," said Mr. Ford. "Didn't we hear, Sal, they'd thrown him over?"

"He picks himself up now and then, though," answered his wife, laughing.

"He really did very well in Africa," said the Jewess, who always knew everything and everybody. "His father married an Irish dairy-girl, a fascinating minx, they say. The ceremony was performed none too soon, I fancy; just before he was introduced."

"They always say nasty things of women who struggle up," said Mrs. Illian, fixing Mrs. Venner with her lorgnon. "You must know this, Mrs. Venner."

The "you" was barely emphasized, but Mrs. Venner was not dull. A furious gleam shot out of her small, keen eyes, those eyes in which, with all her flaunting, there remained a suggestion of the ghetto, a fear of the amiable crack of the Christian whip, with its "Dog, go back to thy kennel!" But she did not answer, and turned to engage young Lord Burton in an abrupt colloquy.

"Du Nord?" said Sir Charles, struggling with his salad. "Nobody receives him any more."

"Dick won't have him in our house," said the favorite's niece, whose opinion as such was portentously valuable. "I like him."

The M.P. protested he knew little of the gentleman, but he had been a donkey to racket round the world in the Countess Zverda's wake. She was enough to swamp any man she undertook.

"The word's a good 'un," chuckled the Secretary. "They say the woman paid his gambling debts and when she got through he chucked her, at Monterey."

"The California papers are full of it," said the American friend. "I can send

you the clipping, Mrs. Illian, if you want detail. They quarreled in San Francisco, and . . ."

"The Du Nord's are an old family," said the M.P.

"Old families, like old houses, can't bear all lights. They have dark corners, crannies better left covered by the dust of life. There are queer stories about the Du Nord's," said Sir Charles.

But Mrs. Illian had heard enough. "You need not send me the paper," she said to the American, and then went on in a low voice to speak with the Secretary, her neighbor.

"Our Hebrews are so different; so unaggressive socially. They never push. The men have their own clubs. The women are full of dignity, perfectly satisfied with their own society. We have but one of their families in ours, and they did not knock at the door. They were begged to come in. They were all brilliant—one of them splendidly handsome, another with great talents. They only capitulated at our insistence. The Jews with us are honest and solid. Great bankers; astute merchants; admirable citizens; excellent tenants; pay their rents, their just debts; are useful and generous. The women are pretty, always accomplished, highly educated, often gifted musicians. I—who am without prejudice—often marvel that the line has been drawn so decidedly. But it is drawn, and it remains."

"The great South Africans knocked down the last fences that Montefiore, Beaconsfield, the Rothschilds and others had taken," said the Secretary, "and we are deluged now, as you see, with a new element."

As Mrs. Venner was looking over at them with ill-disguised mistrust, they turned the subject into safer channels.

Yes, she had heard enough. The man, Roy Du Nord, was evidently a detrimental if not a scamp. No palliation was possible. She should have been pleased with the perspicacity with which she had gauged him. Yet the next night, when she was dining at the Carlton, her eyes swept vestibule

and corridor, lounging-room and restaurant, in the vain hope of catching sight once again of his discomfited and reproachful face. For thus had it appeared to her on that dark morning, in the dim grayness of their last adieux. And in the streets, parks and thoroughfares, as at hotels and in private drawing-rooms, she looked for him in vain.

But she never met him and she never heard his name. They both had been absorbed into that great, palpitating world of London, where friend and enemy may seek each other in vain for years.

## VII

SHE had been quite three weeks with her friends at their historic house in Chelsea, and had met and dined and breakfasted with many old acquaintances. The town was full of Christmas shoppers and, even at this off-season, gay from a voyager's point of view.

One day something happened which took upon itself the aspect of adventure and sent her heart into a flutter she could not fathom. She and her maid were hastening through the crowds of Piccadilly to meet her hostess, Lady Spark, who, in her motor, was to pick them up at a neighboring book-shop. Suddenly, Thérèse stiffened and pulled back, as if to arrest her mistress's attention. Thinking the girl was only pointing out some unusually alluring window, with its display of holiday gifts, Mrs. Illian hurried on, exclaiming, "No time to waste, Thérèse, or Lady Spark will be impatient." She was a firm, fast walker, and she distanced the maid considerably in a minute's space.

"Ah, madame," cried Thérèse, running up after her, "*il était si désappointé.*"

"He was disappointed? Who?" said Mrs. Illian, still cleaving the crowd. "What are you talking about?"

"*Le Capitaine Du Nord.*"

She stopped short.

"He grazed you, madame. Your dress brushed him. He was with *un ami*—he wanted to speak with you—he turned—he waited—but madame would not look at him—would not even look at him. Madame was very cruel."

She, too, was bewitched, thought Mrs. Illian. "Why didn't you tell me?" she cried angrily.

"Madame would not listen—I did all I could. He is gone now and it is too late. But he stayed several seconds staring after madame, and he looked, oh, so miserable!"

"Not heartbroken, I fancy," said Mrs. Illian coldly, and moving on with a curious sinking at her heart.

So he could but surmise that, vaguely distrusting him, she had made her inquiries, swift and keen, and that as a result she administered the cut direct. Well, what in the world could it matter to her? To him? What if her rôle had been a little mean and small? What did it count in the rush of the world which separated them and put between them an abyss they dared not cross? She had feared the man. She and Eileen had settled it. If a person is going to drown you, you must swim for life. Push him off. In her position of lone woman and of stranger she could not afford a disreputable hanger-on. She had been wise.

Such wisdom, however, does not always bring the ecstasy of reward.

She knew, from the beating of her pulses, how she had meant to make amends to him for her unkindness. For ever since these people had defamed him there lurked in her a thirst to say a gentle word to him; to tell him that his detractors had not harmed him with her; that she still knew there was some good in him, blacken and vilify him as they might. The obloquy that they had cast upon him but served to increase her pity, and pity is a passion in certain natures. What did they know of the pain the stain of his birth had left upon him? What could these smug people tell of the temptations of his temperament, the

pitfalls of a venturesome and wandering life? Is not common sense but another name for cowardice?

Then, as she stumbled forward, she weakly turned to her companion. "What do you mean?" she asked rather shamefacedly. "That he looked unhappy?"

Thérèse, who was sentimental, saw her advantage. Before they had reached the book-shop she had drawn a picture of the captain's despair, which, if exaggerated, was at least picturesque. And later in the evening, when she was loosening her mistress's hair, she said, unexpectedly:

"Perhaps madame herself thought the *capitaine* admired Madame Severyn, but those who had eyes in their heads could see who he was after." And the words were sweet to Imogen Illian.

From her mother's apartment on the Avenue d'Eylau, in Paris, Mrs. Severyn wrote to Mrs. Illian. She dwelt upon topics of general interest; Paris and its fashions, shops visited and friends encountered. She lingered on a visit to the Louvre. Philippe de Champagne's portrait of a little girl she was sure had served for model to a great American painter for his famed picture of a modern child. There was a word about music, the plays, and an exclamation that Paris was more wonderful than ever. Only in the final phrase was Captain Du Nord referred to. It was done playfully enough.

"By the way," she wrote, "what has become of that good-looking scapegrace, Captain Du Nord? It would be ungrateful in you not to know, for I am quite sure that he adored you."

Eileen's fingers were singed, but her healthy mind and what she called her chilly temperament had brought reaction, whose chief bitterness lay in a possible flaw in the new woman friend whose peculiar fascination captivated her. If one so high-bred and so dignified could stoop to play a petty game, who then could be relied on? Had she expected too much of Mrs. Illian? She could not think hers a simple character. She guessed complexities. "Perhaps," she thought, "we expect

too much of the wise, but their lapses shake the foundations of belief." She was made more unhappy by Mrs. Illian's possible unworthiness than by the pin prick of Du Nord's omissions. They both had, in a measure, charmed her, but she had not ranked them in the same order. Now, away from the man's impelling personality, she classed him where he undoubtedly belonged.

Her letter reached Mrs. Illian just before her unfortunate encounter—or rather, non-encounter—with the captain. She found it an intricate one to answer. She remembered that Eileen had told her of her intention to visit Cairo at Midwinter. She knew that Egypt was Du Nord's destination. In the chances of travel they would probably meet. Should she now stab him with the final blow? Give him the *coup de jarnac*? Ruin him in the young woman's estimation? Tell her trenchantly what she had heard at Willis's? Or, adopting the doctrine of the *laissez faire*, leave things to fate? Eileen was under a mother's protection, and was herself no child. She had passed through deep experiences into peace. She decided to say nothing, or at least only these few words:

I have not seen Captain Du Nord. You know I rarely spoke with him. I do not doubt that by this he is off to the East.

She avoided chaffing Eileen on his attentions. She would not fan, if it still existed in the young woman, any remnant of a sentiment which might prove perilous. She went on to say:

I am thinking of Biarritz, by-and-bye. There is a lovely villa, a paradise down there called Fleur de Pêche, where I once passed some pleasant days. I think I'll try and take it for some weeks.

## VIII

CHRISTMAS was over. The shoppers had gone back to their country houses. London was wrapped in fog. One could not tell the difference between one's neighbor's nose and his door-knob. And Mrs. Illian was packing for departure. Her Chelsea visit was over and she was stopping for the



moment at a hotel in Mayfair. She left Thérèse—they were going the next morning to a round of house parties—busy with her boxes, and went out one afternoon to grope for a bit in Piccadilly. She liked the thoroughfare, with its varied types. It was crowded, as usual, with a heterogeneous mass of humans. The middle of the street was an *impasse*. Ruddy-faced 'bus-drivers and congested cabbies were exchanging anathemas, while the more stolid drivers of the cumbersome merchants' wagons and dray-carts mumbled oaths at one another in impotent protest.

She wished to cross to buy an engraving she had admired in a shop window which was called "The Wishing-Pool." It had strangely pleased her fancy, but, after waiting quite fifteen minutes on the curb, she gave it up as hopeless. She could not find pluck enough even for an attempt. As she looked up, undecided, she noticed that she was standing just in the shadow of the Royal Academy. Mrs. Illian was one of those who love picture galleries, less, possibly, for detailed exploration than for the atmosphere of their repose. How inscrutable is the fiat of event! How predetermined the law of doom! There are moments when we are inclined to think that our friends the Presbyterians are right, after all. Predestination stands at the gate of paradise! Had Mrs. Illian crossed Piccadilly she would not have met the man whose image had become of late an obsession of her thought.

As she stood irresolute, wondering if she still had leisure to enter these inviting portals, two arms were suddenly stretched on either side of her and the rampart of a broad chest barred her way.

"This time you do not escape!"

An American or Frenchman who had gone the pace he had kept for the past two weeks—her cut of him had borne evil fruits—would have shown traces of fatigue, would have been haggard and worn, dyspeptic and forlorn. Captain Du Nord was as fresh

as a dawn of June, with that rare endowment of his race—if a negation can hold a gift—no nerves. He was as faultlessly well groomed, as debonair, as physically alluring as ever. Nevertheless, there was an expression in his eyes Mrs. Illian had never seen before.

"I do not wish to escape," she said, smiling up at him.

But he did not return her smile. "Were you going in here?" he said.

"Yes."

"Well, that'll suit me exactly. I will go in with you. I've got something to say to you—as well there as anywhere."

So they crossed the court in silence. The guardian at the entrance told them what they should have known, that at this time there was no special exhibition, but, he added, that of course, upstairs, there was the usual collection, always worth seeing, open to the public. They went up the two or three flights, still in silence.

His eyes were upon her. They made her uneasy.

The quality in women which claims protection does not appeal to the British male. He proposes to protect no one but himself. It was therefore odd enough that the slightly worn contour of Mrs. Illian's cheek, her faint, fugitive color, the melancholy of her lips, the touch of fatigue in her heavy-lidded eyes, which gave a tender note to a physiognomy otherwise dominantly intellectual, were the very attributes which so forcefully attracted Captain Du Nord. For if she had thought of him, he had thought of her.

The galleries were absolutely deserted. "There's nobody here," he said. "We've got it to ourselves."

They began to go round the first rooms, exchanging a few banal remarks about Romney's portraits, paused at a man's head of Albertinelli's, came back to a lovely lady of Sir Thomas Lawrence's, criticized a landscape of Philips de Koninck's. But all the while his eyes were not on these, but on her face.

"I see there are some sculptures beyond. Let's do them. I prefer them

always to paintings; they rest one and—there is not much time."

She was talking to talk; she hardly knew what words she uttered. When they got quite into the middle of the line between the busts and statuary he closed up again upon her, obstructing her way as he had done in the street.

"I've got something to say, and I want to say it now." He had never smiled.

"I am listening."

"Why did you cut me the other day?"

"How can you believe it?" she murmured. "I did not even see you."

"Thérèse saw me," he went on doggedly. "I almost touched you. She tried to make you stop or turn, but you wouldn't even listen."

"I did not understand—" she stammered faintly.

"Don't lie to me," he replied hotly. "You did understand. You could have sent her after me. God! I stood bare-headed staring after you until you were out of sight."

"Very well," she said quietly, "have it as you will."

"Couldn't you guess? Didn't you know? Didn't you feel that I was dying to see you?"

It seemed to her as if, after long torpor, she was alive again. The throb of his words brought back a sense of youth, which seemed to hold in them some nameless element of joy. How tame was peace!

"I don't know what it is about some people," he went on; "I suppose it is what one calls power. Well, you had it over me from the first moment. Of course it has something to do, I suppose, with one's own state of mind. Mine was pretty black when I first met you. The instinctive shrinking from me of a woman like you was what hurt; it seemed to show me the hole I had sunk into, where I am. Come and sit down over there," he said.

She followed him mechanically to a shabby plush sofa ranged against the rail.

"It broke me up awfully, your not asking me to call. I know I wasted all

my time on the trip, instead of letting you see how I cared for you—for your—help. But, don't laugh, I was modest, I didn't dare intrude, I was shy with you. Your friend said when a fellow drowns you must let him go, or you sink yourself. But I did not mean to drown you. You could teach a fellow to swim."

"Oh!" she said.

"I needed you. A hand. And then, after all, you didn't know anything then. Why should you instantly have judged me harshly? been so hard? Of course, now the yappers have yapped and you have heard. And it is just for this that I have come here with you—to make my confession. My mother was a Roman Catholic—they told you her story, too, no doubt—so I suppose I've got the passion to confess in my bones. Well, here it is—does it frighten you?"

"No," she said gently.

"I want to say that whatever they told you, the truth is far worse. Why, even since you gave me the cold shoulder in Piccadilly—the 'whip,' I call it—the other day, I have done things that better men have got locked up for—men who are not gentlemen," he laughed. "Before that, though I thought you were a little mean to me, I still looked up to you and worshiped you, and it elevated me, as the old ladies say; it kept me fairly straight. But after that I gave up; it was no use."

"You are very cruel," she said.

"But," he went on, not heeding her words, "you are just like the others, not better—no better. You, who seemed to me a queen and an angel. I asked so little. I used to dream about that sweet, sad mouth of yours, but never to kiss it. Ah! such women as you don't know their influence. They'd use it sometimes to help a poor devil up. But you were just like the others; you thought only of yourself, a coward and a snob, it's the same word. You were afraid to inflict me on your friends, to be seen with me in public, even before you knew; and since you have known you've turned your back. Well, that's all—that's all. I'm a

cheat, a liar and a blackguard. I am a million times worse than even my precious uncle thinks, and I wanted to tell you myself and not have you depend on hearsay. Now, I've done."

She remained speechless, scourged by his words. What was there to say? If she defended herself, he would not believe, and, after all, wherein lay her defense?

"Get up," he said; "I've done. Get up."

She obeyed and stood before him. "Dear . . ." she said, and held out her hands, but he did not take them.

"No—it is too late—too late. I'm not fit. Good-bye—my girl."

With tranquil audacity he threw one arm about her, drew her to himself with violence, and left upon her lips a rapid, brutal kiss. Helpless and dizzy, she saw him leave her, disappear in the vestibule, heard his heels clatter on the stairs, the bang of the great baize door.

She wandered on aimlessly through the empty spaces, up and down, up and down, up and down, her gown sweeping the marble floors, aimless, stunned; back to the pictures. Here were the Spanish ones—Josef Bibera—a dead Christ, a Shepherd with a lamb.

Here was the Capture of Carthage—a fine canvas.

Then a sudden terror seized her, a fear of this appalling solitude. The portraits seemed to gibe her, to whisper something as she passed, "She is the one who could have helped a human soul and would not."

What if the man downstairs—it was growing dusk—seeing Du Nord depart, had not remarked she was not with him? What if they closed the Academy—she did not know the rules—and she were left alone in its gaunt gloom to face an awful night?

She rushed to the landing and down the stairs like a whirlwind, relieved at last to find she was not imprisoned. She crossed the quadrangle and reached the street, swallowed once more into its jostle and movement and mist. She seemed to wake as from a dream. What had happened, after all? She had escaped the clutches of a despicable man. She was a free, unfettered creature. She might seek pleasures where she would—go down to Fleur de Pêche, invite congenial friends to visit her, walk as she willed her quiet road.

But one injustice she did not do to poor Du Nord. She did not think him, at least in that one hour, a comedian. For once the man's sincerity remained undoubted.



## THE FINAL LESSON

By Arthur Stringer

I HAVE sought beauty through the dust of strife,  
 I have sought meaning for the ancient ache,  
 And music in the grinding wheels of life;  
 Long have I sought, and little found as yet  
 Beyond this truth: that Love alone can make  
 Earth beautiful, and life without regret!

# THE LADY BLANCHIFLORE

By Clinton Scollard

THE lovely Lady Blanchiflore  
Had scores of lovers fain and fond;  
They flocked to bow her feet before  
From Tarascon to Trebizond,  
And many another outland place,  
Beseeching of her grace.  
They told her tales of all their store—  
The lovely Lady Blanchiflore—  
They told her tales of all their love,  
The truth and tenderness thereof;  
And yet, day following creeping day,  
She said them "nay."

Then roused her wrathful sire and swore,  
"By all the saints, but she shall wed,  
The lovely Lady Blanchiflore;  
No longer shall she bring disgrace  
Through the cold fairness of her face  
Upon the towers of Blanchiflore  
With all their girth and goodlihead!"  
She looked within his eyes and smiled  
As doth a child.

There dwelt a jongleur in that court,  
And a right proper man was he,  
The ballad-singer Broiefort;  
And since 'twas but a small degree  
Of land and gold he held in fee  
He nursed his passion silently,  
Albeit his eyes spake, and her eyes  
(Deep eyes had Lady Blanchiflore)  
Had answered him entreating wise.  
Pride stood between them evermore;  
But now!—but now!—her bower door  
She closed, the Lady Blanchiflore;  
A little space her lips were dumb;  
Then, with a swift resolve, she cried,  
"I'll slay the grisly giant Pride,  
An *he* but come!"

The morrow morn they led her in  
(Her maidens) garbèd gloriously,  
Up to a dais by the wall  
Of the high-vaulted banquet hall;  
Then did the hoary seneschal  
Proclaim, while clarions made din  
Without, the Lady Blanchiflore  
Would that day choose her heart's own knight  
From those who passed before her sight,  
For thus her sire in anger swore  
(Yea, by the blessèd Trinity!)  
That it should be.

They came, proud prince and paladin,  
Duke, earl and baron, and the sun,  
Through the tall windows pouring in,  
A braver scene ne'er shone upon.  
No sign made she the while her sire  
From rigid marble flamed to fire,  
Plucked at his beard, clutched at his sword,  
Cursed her by turns, by turns deplored.  
"An ye will not—" at last he roared—  
"Stay!" spake she, with beseeching voice,  
('Twas oil on raging waters poured!)  
"Music might move me to my choice!"

"Music! God's rood! bring Broiefort!"  
At sight of whom—"Sing, songbird, sing!  
Thou art a bard of good report;  
If thou canst thaw yon frozen thing,  
Ask whatsoever thou wilt of me  
Within my whole wide empery!"  
The jongleur took his place before  
The lovely Lady Blanchiflore;  
A breathing space their glances met;  
He touched a string, he clasped a fret,  
And then he sang until in thrall  
Were all in that vast banquet hall,  
Yet the enamoured worshiper  
Sang but to her.

He ceased, and lo! a rippling gush  
Of acclamation stormed the hush!  
The rose and lily in her face—  
The lovely Lady Blanchiflore—  
Commingled for a little space,  
Then ruled the rose as ne'er before.  
Down from the dais o'er the floor  
She sped (where now was giant Pride?)  
And halted by the minstrel's side.  
Her sire, he mouthed a mighty oath—  
"By Christ, His wounds!"—while sudden glee  
Stirred the old rafters ringingly;  
"'Tis thus the wind blows, then!" he quoth.  
"I am twice sworn and pledged, I see.  
Seek out the priest, where'er he be!  
If there's aught more to say—what more?"  
"Naught!"—blushed the Lady Blanchiflore.

# THE CASE ON THE WALL

By Burton E. Stevenson

GODFREY had asked me around that evening to talk over the still obscure Mercer disappearance, and had named eight o'clock; but the star reporter of a great daily makes his engagements subject to the whim of any one of several millions of people, so I was not surprised when eight o'clock came without bringing Godfrey with it. I filled my pipe, lighted it, and turned to the shelves which covered two of the walls, certain that I should find something there with which to pass an hour or two both agreeably and profitably.

For Godfrey possesses a rather remarkable library, of a sort—unique, indeed, in several of its items; as, for instance, in Professor Lampiere's exhaustive monograph on the shape of the eyebrow in its relation to criminal propensity—a monograph left in manuscript at the author's death and willed to Godfrey as a token of appreciation of his invaluable assistance in the astonishing affair of the Tregarthen birthmark. It is Godfrey's intention to add some notes to this monograph, to preface it with an account of Professor Lampiere's other contributions to criminal science, and to see the book through the press; but until he finds time to do this, it must remain peculiar to his collection.

I had gone over the books more than once, but as I passed from the first case to the second, my eye was caught by an object on the wall which I had never before noticed there. It was a case of polished wood, about five inches square and perhaps two inches deep, with a front of beveled glass. The reflection of the light on this glass for a moment

obscured my view of what lay behind it, but as I moved to one side, I was astonished to see that the only thing the case contained was a half-smoked cigar. It was about two inches in length and occupied the very centre of the case, impaled on a pin.

I was still gazing at this singular object and wondering why it should be worthy of such a shrine, when the door opened and Godfrey himself came in.

"Ah, Lester," he said, "sorry I kept you waiting. There was a case just at the last moment——"

"Of course," I said. "You were lucky to get here so soon. I've been fully occupied."

"In looking at that little memento?" and his eyes followed mine to the case on the wall.

"Yes—and in wondering what it commemorates."

"It commemorates my first victory, Lester," and his face grew reminiscent as he looked at it. "I thought I had lost it, but I ran across it the other day while sorting over some rubbish and decided to have it properly mounted, for it's as dear to me as an author's first acceptance or a lawyer's first brief is to him—dearer, for a lawyer often loses his first case and the author's masterpiece may prove a failure; but that affair was one of my most unqualified successes!"

It was not just then that I heard the story, for with Godfrey business is always first; but afterward, when we drew up before the fire for a final smoke before I said good night, I got it out of him.



## II

It was in the Winter of '92 that Godfrey decided to try detective work, and he naturally chose New York as the best arena. But to get an appointment to the Metropolitan force was no easy matter, and it was not until the following June that this ambition was realized. Even then he found a wide difference between the dream and the reality, for he was at once assigned to duty "up-State," as the district above the Harlem was facetiously called.

It was not an enviable post for a man burning to distinguish himself. The first week passed absolutely without incident, and to Godfrey it seemed a year. He virtually lived at headquarters; instead of becoming fat and somnolent after the manner of Harlem policemen, he grew gaunt and restless; but at last his reward came.

He had awakened rather earlier than usual that morning, and finding that he could not go to sleep again, he got up, dressed, and walked over to headquarters to report. He noticed that the hands of the sergeant's clock pointed to ten minutes of six, and just as he walked around to the desk to glance over the blotter, the telephone-bell rang.

The sergeant unhooked the receiver and placed it to his ear.

"Hello!" he called. Then, after a moment, "What for?"

But to this question he apparently received no answer, for he replaced the receiver with a jerk and swung around to Godfrey.

"They want an officer over at 838 West One Hundred and Twenty-third street, Jim," he said. "Want one pretty bad, I guess. The old fellow who telephoned was about scared to death. Will you go?"

"Yes," said Godfrey, and a moment later was hurrying down the street.

It was only a few blocks, and at the end of ten minutes he stopped before a square, old-fashioned house, standing back from the street in the midst of a little grove of trees. On either side of the place was an empty lot,

which made the grounds seem larger than they really were. A porch ran across the front of the house and another, covered with vines, along the sides.

Godfrey opened the gate and entered. As he mounted the steps to the porch, the door opened a few inches and a face, distorted with grief and terror, peered out.

"Are you the officer?" asked a quavering voice.

"Yes," answered Godfrey, and showed his shield.

"Then for God's sake come in!" and the door was swung back, disclosing an old man with family servant written in every line.

"What's the matter?" Godfrey demanded as he entered. "What has happened?"

For answer, the other beckoned with unsteady hand and led the way along the hall to the door of a room which was evidently the library.

"Look at that," he said, and motioned within.

For an instant, in the semi-darkness, Godfrey saw nothing; then, with a sudden quickening of the pulse, he discerned a figure sitting in a chair facing the door. The head was bowed forward as though in sleep. He approached it and lifted the head with his hand, then let it fall with a little cry of horror at its stare of agony, its protruding eyes and tongue, its swollen lips.

But a moment served to give him back his self-control, and he lifted the head again. This time he perceived the livid band which encircled the neck. The man had been strangled.

"Who is he?" he asked of the servant, who, apparently on the verge of collapse, stood gasping on the threshold, as though not daring to enter the room.

"He's Professor Carew," said the old man, with a sob.

Godfrey started again.

"Professor Carew!" he repeated incredulously, and turned back to the distorted face.

Could this really be the great phys-

icist, honored throughout the world of science, member of a dozen learned societies, officer of the Legion of Honor, decorated by the German Emperor, by the Czar of Russia, by the King of Spain? Professor Carew—and foully murdered!

A great case! But would he be able to handle it? He gripped his hands together and put the doubt behind him.

"Who's the family doctor?" he asked.

"Dr. Sweetser, sir."

"Call him up and ask him to come at once," said Godfrey.

Then, as the servant disappeared, he turned to an inspection of the room.

### III

It was a large apartment, lined to the ceiling with books, crowded and crammed with them, until they overflowed upon the chairs and into the corners. A long library-table stood in the middle of the floor and it was in an easy-chair beside this table that Professor Carew was sitting at the time he met his death.

Besides the door into the hall, there was another leading to a rear room. This door stood half-open and a glance showed Godfrey that the room beyond was Professor Carew's laboratory. Opposite the hall door was a row of three windows, extending to the floor and opening upon the porch at the side of the house. The remaining wall was occupied by a mantel and open fireplace, flanked on either side by shelves.

He had just finished this tour of the room when he heard the front door shut heavily and a hasty step come down the hall. The next instant a man appeared in the doorway—a man whose virile face gave the lie to the gray hair above it. The little case in his hand bespoke the doctor.

"What's this?" he demanded in a voice not wholly steady. "Come, Carew, this won't do!" and he lifted his friend's head to drop it, as Godfrey had done, with a cry of horror.

"This is Dr. Sweetser, I suppose?" said Godfrey, coming forward.

"Yes, that's my name, sir," answered the doctor, turning quickly. "Who are you?"

"My name is Godfrey, sir; I belong to the detective force."

"And what are you doing here?"

"I am trying to bring a murderer to justice," answered Godfrey quietly. "See here," and he rolled the dead man's head to one side. "Professor Carew has been murdered."

The doctor stared with starting eyes at the livid band upon the neck; then he dropped heavily into a chair, set his case upon the floor, and, with shaking hand, mopped the perspiration from his face.

"Wait a minute," he said hoarsely. "I can't believe it! Carew murdered! Why, he hadn't an enemy on earth! Some robber, no doubt. . . ."

"No," said Godfrey. "His watch is still in his pocket, and see, here is his purse. The room is evidently undisturbed."

"Wait!" said the doctor again, and rose to his feet and took a hasty turn up and down. "Now," he added, after a moment, "go ahead, sir. Perhaps I can help you."

"I'm sure you can," Godfrey agreed, and glanced admiringly at the firm-set lips and gleaming eyes. "How long would you say Professor Carew had been dead?"

The doctor bent over the body for a moment.

"From six to eight hours," he said.

"Then he was killed before midnight?"

"Yes—I should say an hour or so before midnight."

"You will see," Godfrey went on, pointing to the livid band, "that the murderer must have stolen up behind him, thrown a rope or something of the sort about his neck and twisted it tight. Here at the back are the marks of his knuckles."

The doctor nodded assent.

"Since Professor Carew is facing the door," Godfrey continued, "his assailant could not have entered unseen

from that direction. He must, therefore, have come either from the laboratory or from the porch. I am inclined to think he came from the porch. The windows, you see, are closed, but the central one is unfastened."

Again the doctor nodded.

Godfrey went to the central window, opened it and passed out upon the porch. The doctor followed him.

"No chance for a footprint," said Godfrey, looking at the closely-clipped turf. "That would have been too fortunate. Ah, see there!" he added.

He was pointing to a half-smoked cigar which lay on a little ledge beside the window nearest the street. He picked it up, smelt it and examined it closely.

"Did Professor Carew smoke?" he asked, at last.

"No, never," replied the doctor. "Nor would he permit smoking in his house. He abhorred the odor of tobacco."

"Ah," commented Godfrey; "then this cigar was left here by someone about to enter—someone who knew of this abhorrence. Suppose we call the servant—what is his name?"

"Browder," answered the doctor. "He and his wife have been here for many years. They were the only servants. Professor Carew, you know, was a bachelor."

Browder was still hovering on the threshold of the library and came forward quickly at the sound of his name.

"Browder," began Godfrey, "I've just found this cigar lying here beside the window. Do you know who left it there?"

The old man gazed at it in astonishment.

"No, sir," he said. "It must have been put there last night. I dusted off the porch yesterday afternoon and it wasn't there then."

"You don't smoke, do you?"

"Me, sir!" cried Browder. "No, sir; not I!"

"Suppose you tell us what occurred last night," suggested Godfrey, leading

the way back into the library; "everything you can remember."

"Well, sir," began Browder, "my master had his dinner at seven o'clock, as usual."

"Did he dine alone?"

"Yes, sir."

"And in his usual spirits?"

"Yes, sir; just as usual."

"And with his usual appetite?"

"Yes, sir; so far as I could see. He never was what you would call a hearty eater. After dinner he sat out there on the porch a while, and then, about eight o'clock, the bell rang. I went to the door and found a foreign-looking man standing there."

"What do you mean by foreign-looking?"

"Well, sir, not like an American. He was very dark, with a big, black mustache that stuck straight out on either side and the sharpest eyes I ever saw. He gave me his card and I took it in to my master. He looked at it, hesitated a moment, and then told me to show the gentleman in."

"Wait a minute," interrupted Godfrey. "Where is the card?"

Browder disappeared into the hall and came back with a little square of pasteboard in his hand. Godfrey took it and read:

"M. ANDRÉ LAMBESQ,

"Paris.

"Ever hear of him, Dr. Sweetser?" he asked.

"No," said the doctor, "I never did."

Godfrey gazed at the card a moment longer, then placed it carefully in his pocket.

"Well, go ahead, Browder," he said. "What happened then?"

"I had some work to do in the dining-room," continued the man, "and didn't hear anything for maybe half an hour. Then my master rang for me, and as I went out into the hall I heard the foreigner talking away at the top of his voice like blazes."

"What was he saying?"

"I don't know, sir. I judged he was using his native language. When I

got to the door of the library I saw him walking up and down, waving his hands in the air and red in the face as a turkey-cock. But he calmed down all of a sudden when he saw me there.

"Show the gentleman out, Browder," said my master, and then said something quick-like to the foreigner, who answered in the same way, but I couldn't understand nothing but one word, 'regret.'

"When I came back I found my master setting at the table there, writing a letter.

"Wait a minute, Browder," he said. 'I want you to mail this for me.'

"So I waited, and pretty soon he directed and sealed it and gave it to me, and I took it to the box at the corner."

"Did you read the address?" asked Godfrey.

"No, sir; I didn't," Browder answered with offended dignity.

"I was sure you didn't," said Godfrey, smiling. "What next?"

"Well, just as I got back I met one of the neighbors, Mr. Morrell, at the gate coming in and I brought him on into the library."

"Who is Mr. Morrell?" asked Godfrey, turning to the doctor.

"He used to be the head of one of the largest wholesale drug houses in the city. He retired some years ago, and is reputed to be very wealthy."

"Was he in the habit of calling on Professor Carew?" Godfrey continued, turning back to Browder.

"Yes, sir; he called quite often. He and my master were the trustees of the Lyons estate."

"The Lyons estate?" Godfrey repeated.

"I can tell you about that," broke in the doctor, "though I don't see that it is especially relevant. When Mark Lyons died, ten or twelve years ago, he named his two closest friends as trustees of his estate to manage it in the interest of the Lyons Maternity Hospital, which he had founded."

"Was the estate a large one?"

"It was estimated at fifteen millions."

"Not a small one, at least," com-

mented Godfrey. "How long did Mr. Morrell stay?"

"About two hours, I should say, sir. I'm not sure, for master let him out, as he often did. But about eleven o'clock, when I looked in the library, master was alone. He was setting there in that very chair reading some papers. When he heard me at the door he looked up and told me to lock up the house and go to bed; that he wouldn't need me any more."

"Did you lock these windows?"

"Yes, sir; all of them."

Godfrey examined the locks with knitted brow. It was plainly impossible to throw them from the outside without cutting away the sash, and the sashes showed no mark.

"Well, and what next?" he said, at last. "Did you go to bed?"

"Yes, sir."

"And heard nothing unusual?"

"No, sir, not a thing. I woke up once in the night and came to the head of the stairs and looked down to see if master had left the lights burning, as he did sometimes, going to bed absent-minded like; but they were out, so I went back to bed and it wasn't till this morning when I came down that I found him——"

A sob choked him.

"And you called the police at once?"

"Yes, sir; as soon as I could get my wits together. It was the only thing I could think of to do."

"Where was your wife all this time?"

"She cleaned up the kitchen after dinner last night and then went to bed. She never comes in the front of the house and didn't know till I told her . . ."

Again his voice trailed off into a sob.

Godfrey glanced around the room, his eyes at last resting on the bowed figure by the table.

"You say your master was reading when you saw him last?"

"Yes, sir."

"Papers, I think you said?"

"Yes, sir; there was a bundle of them on the table beside him."

"It is a significant thing, Dr. Sweetser," Godfrey pointed out, "that there

are no papers there now. Yet it is possible that Professor Carew put them away and then sat down to think them over. You say he had no enemies?"

"Not an enemy on earth, sir. How could he have? Why, I never knew a man so universally beloved and honored."

"And yet, he must have had one enemy," and Godfrey pointed to the band of livid flesh.

"Yes," agreed the doctor hoarsely. "But I can't believe it! Even here, looking at it, I can't believe it!"

Godfrey fell silent a moment, gazing down at the bowed head with its crown of white hair, at the delicate, sensitive hands, now clutching convulsively the arms of the chair.

"He had retired from active life, I understand?" he said at last.

"Yes; and yet his life was fuller of activity than most men's. He still kept up his experiments, and he was interested in many philanthropies—especially in the Lyons Hospital, which was very dear to him. I was head physician there some years ago, and in that way first got to know him. He was very enthusiastic over the work the hospital was doing—a work which had never adequately been done before. He was never weary of talking about it and planning for it. He intended, I think, to bequeath it his own estate."

"Was Mr. Morrell equally enthusiastic?"

"Yes, in every way; he was a most painstaking and conscientious trustee. His knowledge of business made him especially valuable; he was able to invest the moneys belonging to the hospital to the best advantage and its income has always been very large—so large, indeed, that an addition to the main building has been undertaken."

"Do you happen to know just how large?"

"The statement last year showed the gross receipts to be something over \$750,000."

"That's five per cent. on fifteen

millions—a remarkable showing, truly," agreed Godfrey. "The hospital was evidently very fortunate in its trustees."

He walked to one of the windows and stood for a moment tapping absently on the pane and staring out across the lawn. Then he picked up the half-smoked cigar, which he had placed carefully on the table, and contemplated it for a time in silence. It seemed to fill him with a strange perplexity.

"Dr. Sweetser," he said at last, "I want you to examine this cigar closely, so that you can identify it hereafter, if need be. I want you to notice particularly these distinct, even depressions across the end which was in the smoker's mouth. Do you think you will know it again?"

"Yes," answered the doctor, after a moment; and Godfrey wrapped the cigar tenderly in a piece of paper and placed it in his pocket.

"I'll have to inform the coroner," he said, with a little sigh, "and turn the case over to him. Where will I find the telephone?"

"This way, sir," said Browder, and led the way to the instrument.

The message took but a moment, and Godfrey retraced his steps to the library. He was plainly worried. There was a deep line between his eyes and his lips were compressed and bloodless.

"I wouldn't take it too hard," said Dr. Sweetser, soothingly, noticing his haggard countenance. "This won't be the first crime which has defied solution."

"No," agreed Godfrey. "Has any theory occurred to you, doctor?"

"Yes," answered the doctor promptly, "and I'm sure it's the right one. Some madman, escaped from an asylum, perhaps, wandered into the grounds, attracted by the light pouring through those windows. He approached them and saw this old man sitting here alone. He raised the window gently, crept in and seized my poor friend by the throat . . ."

"You forget," objected Godfrey,

"that Browder says he fastened all the windows."

"And yet the central one was found unfastened. Professor Carew may have opened the window himself, after Browder locked it, finding the room close or wishing for a breath of fresh air before he went to bed. Or perhaps Browder forgot to lock it. At any rate, it was through that window that the murderer made his entrance and escape."

Godfrey nodded.

"I agree with you there," he said.

"And, depend upon it, the murderer was a madman. Who else would seek to kill a quiet and inoffensive man? You have yourself pointed out that robbery was not the motive. I don't doubt we'll hear of an escaped lunatic in the course of the morning."

"Perhaps we shall," assented Godfrey. "You may be right, doctor—your theory is certainly plausible. I hope you will mention it to the coroner. You would better wait for him here and take charge of things."

"I will," agreed the doctor. "It is the least I can do for my old friend."

#### IV

THE task of finding M. André Lambesq proved disappointingly simple. He was registered at the Waldorf and had not yet arisen when Godfrey sent up his card. An inquiry of the clerk developed the fact that M. Lambesq had arrived the day before on one of the French line boats, and had come directly to the hotel.

Half an hour later Godfrey was admitted to M. Lambesq's presence. Amid exclamations of astonishment and horror, he related briefly the facts of Professor Carew's death. M. Lambesq was inconsolable. The world of science had lost its supreme leader, and in such a manner! He, himself, had come from Paris to lay before the great savant a new theory of light phenomena—a theory more comprehensive, more satisfactory, more subtle than either the corpuscular or the

undulatory—a theory which, however, M. Carew had refused to credit.

For a moment Godfrey wondered if this might not be the madman; but a few questions settled all that. After leaving the Carew house M. Lambesq had driven direct to his hotel, where he had met some compatriots. He had been with them from nine o'clock until after midnight. He gave Godfrey their names. There could be no doubt of his entire innocence.

Godfrey left the hotel, walked across to Sixth avenue and took the Elevated downtown. He got off at Bleecker street and, after a short walk through a maze of dirty thoroughfares, entered a tall building, redolent with the odor of tobacco.

"I want to buy some cigars," he said to the heavy-faced man behind the counter, "but before I do so, I would like to see your expert a moment."

"Very well, sir," answered the other, and touched a bell. "Show this gentleman to Mr. Jennings," he said to the boy who answered it.

They mounted two flights and entered a little room lined with innumerable pigeon-holes. A tall, thin man sat at a table by the window, peering at something through a microscope. He looked up as the door opened.

Godfrey introduced himself and produced from his pocket a half-smoked cigar.

"I want to duplicate this cigar," he said, as he unwrapped it, "and I don't know what it is."

Jennings took it, looked at it, sniffed it.

"There can't be any doubt," he said. "That cigar is distinctive—no wonder you liked it. It's the El Trinidad Imperiale. A box will cost you thirty dollars."

"Thank you," said Godfrey, and he stopped at the office downstairs and bought a box.

On the journey back to Harlem he saw nothing of the crowds jostling past him. So the murderer of Professor Carew smoked El Trinidad Imperiales! That seemed absurd. Per-



haps he was on the wrong track, after all. The cigar might have been left there by someone else; there was nothing to connect it positively with the criminal. Yet it must have been placed there the night before by someone about to enter the library by the window—someone either familiar with Professor Carew's abhorrence of tobacco or else not wishing to be incommoded by a cigar in the desperate business he was about to undertake.

He left the train at his station and walked over to headquarters. The sergeant grinned when he saw him.

"That case is a little too big for you, ain't it, Jim?" he asked.

"It is pretty big," agreed Godfrey.

"So the old man thought. He's detailed Simmonds and Growden from the Central Office to look after it."

Godfrey flushed, but kept himself in hand.

"Has he?" he asked, with seeming carelessness. "What do they think about it?"

"They think it was done by a lunatic. They're out looking for him now."

Godfrey's face remained impassive, but his eyes were strangely bright.

"I guess I'll go out and take a look around, too," he said.

But instead of looking around, he mounted straight to his room and spent the remainder of the afternoon there, chewing and otherwise mutilating those splendid *El Trinidad Imperiales* in a manner too shameful to describe.

## V

THE inquest was held next day, and the little court-room was crowded to the doors. The crime had stirred the city to its depths and a great clamor had arisen that the murderer be found and punished. Not only the three officers, but a veritable swarm of reporters were working on the case, and added to these was a host of amateur detectives, stirred to action by the reward of one hundred thousand dollars offered by Professor Carew's co-trustee, Mr. James Morrell. Other

rewards were to follow as soon as various boards and deliberative bodies could take action, and scores of wild-eyed men were feverishly hunting down clues which led nowhere, and spinning theories which would have done credit to M. Lecoq, but which, unfortunately, there was no way of verifying.

Godfrey chose an inconspicuous seat and listened to the testimony with little apparent interest. Absolutely nothing new was developed. The only story he had not heard was that of Mr. Morrell, and it agreed in every particular with the story Browder had told. He had made merely a friendly call, had remained about an hour and Professor Carew himself had taken him to the door. He had not heard of the crime until Dr. Sweetser telephoned him, and he had hastened at once to the house. Professor Carew had been one of his dearest and closest friends, and he would gladly give half his fortune to bring his murderer to justice.

Indeed, it was evident that Mr. Morrell had not yet recovered from the shock of his friend's death. His lips trembled from time to time and his hands shook convulsively as he told of his close intimacy with the murdered man. He was suffering so keenly that the coroner had the mercy to dismiss him with the fewest possible questions. Once off the stand, he gradually recovered his self-control and was soon giving close attention to the testimony.

But none of it furnished a clue to the culprit, and the jury, without retiring, brought in the usual verdict of "death at the hands of a person unknown." In the stir which followed the rising of the court Godfrey approached Dr. Sweetser.

"Doctor," he said, "I wish you would introduce me to Mr. Morrell. There are one or two points which he may be able to clear up."

"Certainly," assented the doctor, and led him forward.

Mr. Morrell had withdrawn a little to one side and was talking earnestly with Simmonds and Growden. He was a tall, distinguished-looking man, with

gray hair and a florid face. At the moment he was engaged in lighting a cigar.

"Hello, Sweetser," he said, as the doctor approached. "It seems that your theory is likely to prove the right one."

"I was sure it would," replied the doctor. "I want to introduce Mr. Godfrey, who, as I have already told you, was first on the scene."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Godfrey," said Mr. Morrell, and shook hands. "I think you'll agree with the doctor and your colleagues here that the crime could have been committed only by a lunatic."

"I was rather inclined to think so at first," said Godfrey slowly, "but I don't think so now."

Growden laughed offensively.

"Maybe that theory ain't fancy enough for you," he sneered.

Godfrey flushed.

"Well, I'll believe it when you find the lunatic," he said.

"We *have* found him," retorted Growden triumphantly. "He's locked up down below. He escaped from Hartman's sanatorium night before last. The sanatorium is only a block and a half from the Carew house, and this fellow is especially dangerous—homicidal mania. It's a clear case."

Godfrey looked at him through half-closed eyes.

"You think so?" he asked negligently.

Growden's face turned a deep purple.

"See here," he shouted, "don't you give me none of your impudence! I won't——"

"Oh, come, Sam," protested Simmonds, "what's the use of getting mad with a damned cub like him? Maybe he can save us any more trouble by producing the guilty party himself."

Godfrey's face hardened; his eyes were shining strangely. He got out a cigar and bit off the end.

"Mr. Morrell, will you give me a light?" he asked. Then he paused, with Morrell's cigar in his fingers. "Yes, I believe I can," he said, "and I'll produce him now. Gentlemen,

you behold the murderer of Professor Carew in the person of Mr. James Morrell."

For an instant the group regarded him in astonished silence. Then the detectives broke into a loud guffaw.

But Dr. Sweetser was white with anger.

"I must tell you, sir," he burst out, "that I consider the joke in very bad taste."

"It is not in the least a joke," said Godfrey quietly. "Look at his face!"

They stared at the distorted, quivering countenance, Simmonds and Growden suddenly silent, the doctor visibly appalled. Then he shook his head and turned fiercely back to Godfrey.

"Monstrous!" he cried. "Absurd! Any man would be startled by such an accusation!"

"Shall I tell you how it happened, doctor?" continued Godfrey evenly. "I may err in one or two details——"

"Monstrous!" broke in the doctor. "To make such an accusation without proof."

"I have not made it without proof."

"Where is your proof, then? Let us have it!"

A little crowd had gathered and was listening open-mouthed.

"My proof," said Godfrey slowly, "is that the left lateral incisor in his upper jaw is missing. See—he has his mouth open."

Dr. Sweetser glanced at Morrell and saw that the defect indeed existed; then he turned back to Godfrey, more wrathful than ever.

"Enough of this tomfoolery, sir!" he said sternly. "If every man who had lost a tooth were guilty of murder, there would be few of us at large. Come, Mr. Morrell, let us go. I will see that this affair is reported to the proper authorities."

"Just a moment, Dr. Sweetser," Godfrey interposed. "Will you look at this cigar? It is the one Mr. Morrell handed me a moment ago. It is an El Trinidad Imperiale. The one I found outside Professor Carew's library window was also of that make."

"And what of it, sir? Thousands of men smoke them."

"Not quite thousands, I fancy, since they retail at thirty dollars a box. But look at the cigar, Dr. Sweetser, at the end Mr. Morrell had in his mouth. Do you perceive the depressions across it?"

The doctor looked and turned suddenly livid.

"I wasted nearly a box of those cigars," Godfrey went on, with a sigh, "before I hit upon the explanation of those depressions—before I discovered that the man who murdered Professor Carew had lost one of his front teeth and used the cavity as a sort of natural cigar-holder. Did you ever notice how Mr. Morrell smokes, doctor? Did you ever wonder why he never had that tooth replaced? He doesn't hold his cigar between his teeth—he shoves it into that cavity and keeps it there until the cigar is finished. Do you think one man in a million holds a cigar that way? Well, see here."

He took from his pocket the other cigar, unwrapped it and laid it beside the first one in his open hand.

"Compare them," he said. "You will find the marks identical. I think you must confess, doctor, that in this case a missing tooth is enough to hang a man."

A little ripple of wonder and applause ran through the crowd. It was broken by a crash as Morrell pitched forward to the floor.

## VI

"AND it was enough to hang him?" I asked, as Godfrey fell silent and gazed musingly into the fire.

"Oh, we got other evidence, of course, once we were started on the right track. Besides, Morrell confessed in the end. He had speculated secretly all his life, and as he grew older the mania increased and his judgment and self-control weakened. He ended by embezzling the hospital funds. Professor Carew had left their investment to him—for years he had

been paying the interest out of the principal and making it so large that no one asked any questions. But he was caught in the wheat crash that Spring—he found himself at the end of the rope.

"He could carry on the farce no longer, so he went to Professor Carew that night intending to confess everything; but his courage failed him. Instead, he left behind him the regular falsified report which he had made up. But after he was out on the street again he realized that exposure was certain. He lighted a cigar and paced up and down, trying to decide what to do. At last, he resolved to go back. He knew the ways of the house and he went straight to the windows looking out over the lawn. As he mounted to the porch, he instinctively laid his cigar on the ledge below the window.

"The middle window was open—Professor Carew had no doubt opened it himself—and as Morrell gazed in at him, trying to nerve himself for the ordeal, he saw that he had not been heard. Carew's back was to the window, and a sudden fiendish thought flashed through the brain of the defaulter.

"He knew that Carew's estate had been willed to the hospital; he knew that he himself had been named as its administrator; with that at command, he could tide over the present crisis, perhaps regain all that he had lost! He would have time to rally; there would be no exposure . . .

"He whipped out his handkerchief, twisted it into a rope, crossed the room on tiptoe, and strangled his friend. Then he gathered up the papers, turned out the lights and went out as he had entered, closing the window behind him. He had nerve—he carried out the crime cleverly and coolly. But for one thing he would probably never have been suspected."

"And that was?"

For answer Godfrey lifted his finger and pointed to the case on the wall.

# ALIXE'S MA

By H. T. George

"**S**UPERLATIVE ma," wrote Alixe, "be kind to Carson Sothbey, for he labors under the impression that he is engaged to me, and thus far I have been loath to undeceive him. Now, don't laugh, irreverent ma—this time I'm desperately in love. So receive him with something warmer than your relentless parent tone, but not quite so sultry, perhaps, as you would employ if he bore the license in one hand and me in the other. For he insists on marrying me offhand, which is highly ridiculous, of course—considering me. Please be quite stern and resolved in your decision that we must wait. Remind him of my extreme youth—your maternal dread of giving me up forever (that will be a fearfully sarcastic stunt, but you'll do it with your divinest Madonna expression!) and soothe him as only you know how. He will be in Chicago most of the Winter, and I hope you'll see enough of him to find out what a blissful old darling it is. For I do really intend to marry him some day—it's only time I'm sparring for.

"I shall be simply a dream at the club dance tonight in that pink organdie you made me. You would be in duty bound to fall in love with me. So will Mr. Smith—he's the victim who's taking me—the *sweetest kid*. (Carson's out of town.) Could you do me a bit of lace for a yoke before the Thanksgiving hop? If you haven't time, drop some of those tiresome little pupil stupids. We can forget the rainy day now that I have settled on Carson."

Alixé's ma sighed as she laid the letter down. So many years—or was it only four since the rise and fall of

Alixé's first suitor?—she had been kept patiently to her rôle of relentless parent. For Alixe—so at least she sketchily defined the phenomenon—was always waking in the morning to remember, vaguely, that she had promised to marry a man the night before. It was all her soft heart, she declared, and her love of harmony. A moonlight night, the music-haunted twilight of a conservatory, the shadowy corner of a garden—and Alixe invariably said "yes," and, with seraphic trustfulness, relied upon her mother to get her out of the inevitably ensuing difficulties.

When Alixe's suitors wrote, asking in varying terms of prose and poetry for Alixe's hand, the relentless parent, in a few brief phrases carefully suggested by her daughter, expressed her surprise at the temerity of the doubtlessly estimable young man, and ruthlessly forbade any further consideration of the subject. Whereupon Alixe, weeping gently if it was in the shadow, dry-eyed but tremulously sad of mouth in the garish light, declared that her life, too, must be forever crushed, but she could never marry without ma's consent. And the third finger of Alixe's slim and paint-smudged hand gave up its treasure—there was real regret in the ceremony—and Alixe was free.

There were times when Alixe's ma rebelled against the obedient instincts of her motherhood; when she tired of this rôle of relentless parent and declared that Alixe must extricate herself from any further entanglements of a tender nature.

"As if I could!" wailed Alixe irately. "They're always such nice boys! As

if I could have the heart to hurt them! But you—you're so far off it doesn't matter. Besides, it's your business to have no heart—except for me!"

Thus in the far-off city where she taught the gentle art of water-color and pastel, Alixe counted her victims gaily, and—after varying lengths of time—they forgave her, while Alixe's ma loomed always darkly in their fancy—a personified and sternly irrevocable Fate—an invincible Denial. If they could have known the meekness and submission of Alixe's ma!

But this time she was determined to be firm.

"My dear," she said to Alixe's pictured dark face above her fireplace, "in your own graphic language I'm afraid you're up against it hard. I'm down and out myself—I wash my aged hands of you. You must manage Mr. Smith"—she consulted the letter—"no, Mr. Sothbey, yourself, little girl mine."

And she proceeded to write Alixe in words to that effect.

The next day Mr. Sothbey called. In his eyes, as she came into the hall to meet him, she saw the fleeing banished remnants of his preconceived idea of Alixe's ma. And because she saw she laughed as she shook hands with him. Or was it a little with relief that she had said good-bye forever to that rôle of relentless parent?

She was particularly glad now, for she liked Mr. Sothbey. She saw, with the girl's own shadowy eyes, exactly what Alixe had liked in him—liked so strongly that even a three weeks' engagement had left her still unwilling to let him go entirely.

He was strong and burly and radiant, was Carson Sothbey, but not with the aggressive radiance by which some men of thirty-five cling grotesquely to the Summer months of twenty-two. Almost at her first glance she knew him to be much older than Alixe in years—much younger in the youth that is eternal, in the freshness and the saneness of the happy optimism that lives life gladly but not stormily—as assuredly did Alixe.

He took the hand of Alixe's ma in his own warmly. In his relief in finding her so other than he had pictured her he was a little effusive—with an effusiveness so wholly foreign to his quiet personality that she recognized it and nodded wisely to herself. "Nervous," she decided keenly. "A good sign in a man of his age. He loves Alixe."

Then they sat and talked—of Alixe. The preliminaries over, his effusiveness gone, he led the subject with a subtle wariness which made her lips quiver unmanageably, to the question of a date. In his cautiousness she could read indisputable signs of Alixe's previous warnings.

"It's ma, you see," she could hear Alixe coo with gentle regret. "We can't settle anything till you've talked to ma. And ma will never give her consent—never. She's so inexorable—so absolutely adamant when it comes to my marrying. . . . Without her consent? Oh, Carson dear!"—and here Alixe's eyes would be brought into devastating requisition—"you know you wouldn't want me if you could get me *that* way! Besides, I'm all ma has in the world. It's foolish of her, perhaps, but I *am* ma's world! To lose me—so—I think it would kill darling ma!"

And then without doubt Alixe's eyes had gone into brief eclipse behind a bit of embroidered handkerchief.

Alixe's ma smiled outright—to become suitably grave again as she saw that Mr. Sothbey had reached the climax of his argument. He was leaning forward persuasively, the broad bulk of his shoulders stooping to her with a charming deference and flattering supplication.

"You see, Mrs. Almont, you won't be losing Alixe. If you approve of me—or charitably will not too much disapprove—why insist on our waiting a day longer than is necessary? Give me my share in her—I won't take away yours. Perhaps you may even, in the language of the story-books, gain a son without losing a daughter."

He smiled upon her anxiously, his

eyes on her face—eyes puzzled by the dimple that was trying strenuously to remain in ambush in the lowest rose-leaf of her cheek.

And then suddenly the dimple asserted itself flamboyantly, and Alixe's ma put her hand genially on his.

"Of course you may have her when she is ready to come to you," she said heartily. "I'm satisfied. I'm not a selfish mother—I want Alixe to marry. She's old enough—at twenty-one Alixe is at *least* forty. And I'm sure you would make her happy. I want my big little girl to be happy—but I'm afraid she doesn't quite know what she wants to make her so. And I'm"—she said it with the honest wistfulness that belonged to Alixe's better moments—"I'm not so sure she would always make *you* happy."

"That," said Mr. Sothbey, rising and dragging her to her feet by the mighty gratitude of his hand-clasp, "is my own risk. And I risk it. And you won't be sorry, Mrs. Almont. I won't let you be sorry—never, as my father's name was Carson Sothbey."

As they stood in the hall at his departure, he studied her with keen, candidly approving eyes. In the cool green and white of her organdie gown, with the mass of her brown hair drawn into a great coil that gave a touch of dignity to the otherwise dainty inadequacy of her, she was more childlike than Alixe, more unworldly, more happily girlish, more—virginal, perhaps.

"May I ask," demanded Mr. Sothbey, "why Alixe calls you ma?"

Mrs. Almont laughed—a soft, amused little laugh that was like a distant echo of Alixe's generous young chime.

"Isn't it reprehensible?" she asked. "She never did until she grew too old for me to punish. But she *says*—and I've never decided whether she is reproachful or complimentary—that it's because I'm so essentially un-ma-like. It's a joke, you see," she explained soberly.

"I see," said Sothbey. "I thought you were a stern, forbidding lady who wore gray flannel gowns in Winter—"

"And black lawn in Summer?" comprehended Mrs. Almont reproachfully.

And they laughed together with swift understanding.

"I have told him," wrote Alixe's ma that night, "that he may have you when you choose to let him. And, little girl own, take him. He's a man, Alixe, and a man's heart is not so easily mended as a boy's. I haven't so much minded your wanton destruction heretofore—I've taken your word that the average boy needs some girl like you as a part of his early education. But Carson Sothbey is different. If you mean to marry him, do it before you have time to change your mind. And if you don't—tell him so now. Don't amuse yourself with him. . . . Do you want your yoke of cream lace or dead white?"

And Alixe, with wrathful speed, replied:

"The idea of throwing the responsibility off on me! I didn't think it of you, ma—I didn't, honest! How can you expect *me* to know whether I love him well enough to marry him? I don't think I do—quite. And yet I don't quite think I don't. Really, you'll make me wish I'd never got myself engaged to him. I never should if I hadn't trusted you. And I'll never trust you again. I've had two letters a day ever since he saw you, and all reminding me that it's up to me. I hate to have things up to me—especially things that it's your duty to see to. I'm displeased with you, ma—I am indeed . . .

"White lace and the narrow braid, you know."

Mrs. Almont laid the letter down with a sigh. The keen *rapprochement* between her daughter and herself—the swift, humorous, loving understanding, failed her here. Sothbey's serious face, with the saving glint of amusement in the gray eyes, rose before her. For the first time impatience with Alixe bordered on irritation. She looked at the picture of Alixe's father in its frame of amethyst and gold on her desk.



"I didn't treat you so, did I, dearest?" she appealed to him. And the memory of that only love and its rapturous young happiness was a white mist between her and the picture. "But then," she added, with motherly extenuation, "I was a child, and Alixe is a woman. Perhaps women love so—how do I know? When I grew to be a woman I had been your wife for so long. And there has never been any other—never anyone but you!"

She mused before his picture, slim and vibrant as the sixteen-year-old bride who had mused, child-fashion, and a little frightened, upon the storminess of his passion. Then she went to the telephone and called up Mr. Sothbey.

"Will you dine with me tomorrow?" she asked him. "I know your Sundays must be lonely ones, and I am lonely, too, without Alixe. We can talk of her together."

And Sothbey came, gratefully, armed with an offering of roses—bride roses, with shy, pink blushes fading circumspectly from their white petals. To Alixe he had sent a box of red ones—easily selected. But before these he had pondered deeply and chosen with sudden, happy conviction. And when above them Alixe's ma smiled her bright gratitude Sothbey knew that he had indeed the instinct of an artist.

Alixé lived in careful bohemian style, her big studio redolent of joss-sticks, filled with skilfully draped couches, a jumble of cushions, a whiff of perfumed cigarettes. It suited Alixe; it was the heavy, aromatic atmosphere that blended with her vivid personality. But there was something infinitely refreshing in these four tiny rooms of Alixe's ma—bare, cool rooms, with books and music and pictures for their only adornment.

"Yes," laughed Alixe's ma, "my girlie jeers at my notion of independence, and dines at boarding-houses and eats stupid messes from her chafing-dish. But I am old-fashioned—me. Through the week I trot from house to house and drag stubby fingers through long-suffering scales, but at night and on Sunday I am a

householder, and do worship in my dining-room."

Across the white linen and the sheen of glass and the nodding fragrance of his roses, they talked about Alixe, until her mother-love and his lover's pride seemed to have drawn her incarnate between them, piquant and bewitching and quite irresponsible. And then Mrs. Almont came to the words she had summoned him to hear, and spoke them gravely.

"I am going to amend my first declaration," she told him. "I am going to ask you to give Alixe a little time. Suppose you wait till—Christmas, say? You know—Alixe is—a little headstrong. A little—shall we say—contrary?"

Sothbey's steady eyes, with the faint amusement behind their lashes, met hers and smiled serenely.

"And likewise," he interpreted, "Alixe is a young woman of many engagements and of volatile fancy. You think she may change her mind?"

"There is—danger, perhaps," admitted her mother painfully.

"I can't at all understand that side of Alixe's character, Mr. Sothbey," she added hastily. "But it doesn't mean that she isn't altogether good and sweet and womanly——"

"Dear Alixe's ma," he interrupted her, "don't you think I know Alixe? And it is the Alixe I know I love. I want to marry her. I want my money, that has been so useless heretofore, to stand between Alixe and the incongruous necessity of her working. And between—if you would let me, and I think you would be kind enough—between Alixe's ma and work. But if you think it wise I will wait, even till Christmas, before I urge Alixe again."

"I think it wise," she told him.

And then in the brave little parlor, with its restful empty spaces, she played to him—divining his love of music before he asked for it, and touching the minor chords regretfully as she considered how bored Alixe became with music.

To look at her one would have known that she played as she did—delicately,

daintily, with little ripples of laughter across and through her melodies. Life had touched her so gently that she shrank instinctively from the harsher, broken measures of its passions, and so, one divined, had missed not alone the pain, but the glory of them. Sothbey, watching her as he listened, found himself suddenly and incongruously pitying her.

And so, through the Fall, they waited for Alixe to know her mind.

"Carson is a darling," wrote Alixe, "or else, most duplicitous ma, you've headed him off without letting me know. At any rate, he hasn't murmured one little word concerning that momentous question, marriage. And he shall have his reward. When I come home Christmas I'll set the day; because he's been nice to you, too, hasn't he? Theatres and drives—what a delirious career for a demure and proper ma! And all those roses for your birthday—how did he know there should be thirty-eight? I'm glad he's nice to you, ducky ma—he shall have his reward. I swear it. Above my hand and seal.

"ALIXE.

"Can you find me some *écru velveteen* in all Chicago? There isn't any here and I promised Mr. Smith a pillow for his den—he's the dearest kid."

Alixe's ma sat with the letter in her hand and stared at the thirty-eight white roses in the big glass bowl. "How does Alixe keep track of all her men, I wonder?" she mused, with a mother's disapproving pride in their numerical strength. "Now me—there has been one man in all my thirty-eight years. And he—" she crossed to the window and looked out into the night—a lonely, slender figure in her black gown. She had taken to wearing black again of late; taken to middle-aged bonnets and demure black veils, as became Alixe's ma. (So she explained patiently against Sothbey's protestations.)

"And he is twelve years dead," she said softly. A sudden irrational jealousy of Alixe came upon her; of her

rich, wide knowledge of men—the eager steps, the tentative trials and frankly acknowledged mistakes by which she had climbed upward to this great glory of Love. For herself, there had been only, before her shy maidenhood had unfolded the petals of its dream, the swift, satisfied fruition of love; satisfaction where she had never thirsted, accomplishment where she had never longed. Alixe's stormy yearnings, tempests of tears, lawless desire of conquest—what had she ever known of them? And then—then to have the one man come as he had come at last to Alixe!

She kissed the pictured face of Alixe's father in swift contrition. "The one man would still have been you, dear," she reassured him. "And I—should still have been Alixe's ma."

She had not seen Carson Sothbey for a long time. She wondered a little why. He had been so kind to her; even while she commented amusedly upon the interestedness of his attentions she had enjoyed them, full of childish candor in her appreciation of them. In the three weeks since she had seen him last she had missed him frankly—only the birthday roses had spoken of his dutiful regard for her.

"He has spoiled me," she told herself. "What a mother-in-law I shall make—requiring as much attention as he pays Alixe."

Then she heard his step in the corridor, his rap at the door—and she greeted him with a girl's half-resentful pleasure in a call too long deferred.

"Have you been out of town?" she asked.

"No," he said, hanging his overcoat carefully over the back of a chair, and stretching his hands to the fireplace. "No, I have been in town."

"Then you have neglected me," she protested gaily. In her soft, dark draperies, with her somber, laughing eyes—the contradictory eyes of Alixe—she leaned toward him reproachfully. And the laughter died from her face. "You have been sick," she faltered; "you have been in trouble! Is it Alixe?"

But she knew it was Alixe, and her

anger was like a flame against the girl. She put out her hands to him with the quick instinct of maternity to soothe the child another child has hurt.

"Oh, I am sorry, sorry!" she cried; "sorry I am her mother if she has done this thing!"

Then, suddenly, she understood—as fully, as unmistakably as though her life long she had been used to reading such secrets in men's eyes. And she would have withdrawn her hands—breathlessly, blindly, even as she would have snatched her soul from the burning.

"You must not—you must not—" she whispered, but the words were crushed against his lips.

After a moment he let her go, and they stood staring at each other dumbly in the orderly little room.

"Sit down," she said at last, quite steadily. The only change in her was that the laughter seemed driven forever from her eyes. "We can't quite ignore what has happened. But we can be sensible people and discuss it sensibly. It's only a momentary madness, you know. You haven't seen Alixe for so long, and I am like her—only so *much* older. Old enough"—they had laughed at life successfully for so long, she and Alixe, that even now she smiled at him—"quite old enough to be her mother."

So she met her Hour, bravely, and was conscious of her bravery, with a certain dull satisfaction in it.

"Don't!" he protested angrily. He had flung himself into a chair in a shadowed corner behind the piano and only his eyes, with their man's impatience of suffering, were clear to her. "We can acknowledge the—mockery of it all, perhaps, but we needn't deny the—pain. We don't owe that to Alixe!"

"We owe—everything to Alixe," she said gently. "I, as her mother—you as the man she loves. Because Alixe loves you. Alixe has found her heart at last. And we—we waited for that. It was not part of our plan that we should fail Alixe."

"Granted," he said harshly, "Alixe loves me. If she had not she would have flung me aside, and shed a brief tear through her laughter as she did it. Alixe loves me—but you?"

He did not stir toward her. He only watched her from his shadows. But he saw her eyes widen and her lips grow slowly white.

"I am Alixe's mother," she said at last, simply.

The little decorative clock on the mantel ticked with vapid insistence. "You are Alixe's mother," it reiterated stupidly, as if there was nothing else in all the world to say, as if the final word lay not always with Alixe.

There was the sudden whirr of skirts in the corridor, the sudden echo of footsteps in the hall. The roses shivered before the clashing of the door—and Alixe was in the room. Alixe—glowing among her furs, tremulous, laughing, crying, crushing her mother in her merciless embrace.

"Oh, blessed ma!" cried Alixe. "Most darlingest and dearest ma! Aren't you glad to see me? Aren't you glad I've come? And ma, you've got to get me out of this—it's the worst scrape I was *ever* in. I'm bowed down with shame, I'm the most graceless felon unhung in any State where they hang females! But, ma, I'm happy, happy, happy—and I'm married!"

And then one saw—not that he was too insignificant to have been seen before, but only that Alixe with her vehemence and her vigor and her tears would have obliterated even a bigger man—the lad who stood behind her; a wholesome young giant with his happy heart in his eyes and his pride in Alixe on every line of him.

"Ma, this is Billy Smith," said Alixe, with a politeness startling in its suddenness. "And please, you've been a relentless parent so long I didn't dare trust him to you—he's such a tender lamb and so easily discouraged, so I married him all on my own responsibility. I only decided this morning. And ma"—she turned tragical eyes of entreaty upon her relentless parent—"if you were ever a blessed, tactful.

generous old ma, tell Carson! I'll die first—I would afterward, anyway!"

Then out of his shadows Mr. Sothbey loomed, apologetically.

"Could you—could you say all that again, Alixe?" he demanded. And incongruous joy chanted pæans in his voice.

Alixé, falling back an amazed step, looked first from him to her mother, and then from her mother to him. And in the face of her mother, ashamed, repentant, glorified, she found enlightenment.

"Billy," she gasped, "can you unhook this fur thing? I've—I've—I've got to have room to laugh!"

And she laughed, swaying helplessly against Billy's shoulder.

"Oh, ma!" she gurgled. "Oh, treacherous, aged ma!" And after a

while she lifted her head and wiped her eyes, before she turned them reproachfully upon her mother.

"Do you realize, egregious ma," she demanded sternly, "that you are old enough to be his mother——?"

"Oh, no, no, Alixe," protested Alixe's ma.

"—in-law?" finished Alixe firmly.

And then, contritely, both of them, they flung themselves into each other's arms. And the two men stood by awkwardly—with the keen embarrassment of healthy masculinity before the tears of their womenfolk. But when, under two pairs of wet lashes, they saw the triumphant laughter flash—solemnly, silently, warmly, Billy and Sothbey shook hands.

They were so much alike—Alixé and Alixe's ma.



## VICTOR AND VANQUISHED

By Aloysius Coll

WE met—her rivals! Where he fell  
The trampled grass was red.  
His hand lay gripless on the hilt  
I lived—and he was dead!

One thrust he buried deep for her—  
It pierced my armpit through;  
I drew my cloak about the stain,  
I cleaned my sword in dew.

I went to her. With trembling lips  
She kissed the stain of red. . . .  
The vanquished, he was living yet;  
The victor, he was dead!

# WHEN GOD LAUGHS

By Jack London

"The gods, the gods are stronger; time  
Falls down before them, all men's knees  
Bow, all men's prayers and sorrows climb  
Like incense toward them; yea, for these are gods, Félise."

CARQUINEZ had loosened up finally. He stole a glance at the rattling windows, looked upward at the beamed roof, and listened for a moment to the savage roar of the sou'-easter as it caught the bungalow in its bellowing jaws. Then he held his glass between him and the fire and laughed for joy through the golden wine.

"It is beautiful," he said. "It is sweetly sweet. It is a woman's wine, and it was made for gray-robed saints to drink."

"We grow it on our own warm hills," I said, with pardonable California pride. "You rode up yesterday through the vines from which it was made."

It was worth while to get Carquinez to loosen up. Nor was he ever really himself until he felt the mellow warmth of the wine singing in his blood. He was an artist, it is true, always an artist; but somehow, sober, the high pitch and lilt went out of his thought-processes and he was prone to be as deadlly dull as a British Sunday—not dull as other men are dull, but dull when measured by the sprightly wight that Monte Carquinez was when he was really himself.

From all this it must not be inferred that Carquinez, who is my dear friend and dearer comrade, was a sot. Far from it. He rarely erred. As I have said, he was an artist. He knew when he had enough, and enough with him was equilibrium—the equilibrium that is yours and mine when we are sober.

His was a wise and instinctive temperateness that savored of the Greek. Yet he was far from Greek. "I am Aztec, I am Inca, I am Spaniard," I have heard him say. And in truth he looked it, a compound of strange and ancient races, what of his swarthy skin and the symmetry and primitiveness of his features. His eyes, under massively arched brows, were wide apart and black with the blackness that is barbaric, while before them was perpetually falling down a great black mop of hair, through which he gazed like a roguish satyr from a thicket. He invariably wore a soft flannel shirt under his velvet corduroy jacket, and his necktie was red. This latter stood for the red flag (he had once lived with the socialists of Paris), and it symbolized the blood and brotherhood of man. Also, he had never been known to wear anything on his head save a leather-banded sombrero. It was even rumored that he had been born with this particular piece of headgear. And in my experience it was provocative of nothing short of sheer delight to see that Mexican sombrero hailing a cab in Piccadilly or storm-tossed in the crush of the New York Elevated.

As I have said, Carquinez was made quick by wine—"as the clay was made quick when God breathed the breath of life into it," was his way of saying it. I confess that he was blasphemously intimate with God; and I must add that there was no blasphemy in him.



He was at all times honest, and, because he was compounded of paradoxes, greatly misunderstood by those who did not know him. He could be as elementally raw at times as a screaming savage; and at other times as delicate as a maid, as subtle as a Spaniard. And—well, was he not Aztec? Inca? Spaniard?

And now I must ask pardon for the space I have given him. (He is my friend, and I love him.) The house was shaking to the storm, as he drew closer to the fire and laughed at it through his wine. He looked at me, and by the added luster of his eye, and by the alertness of it, I knew that at last he was pitched in his proper key.

"And so you think you've won out against the gods?" he demanded.

"Why the gods?"

"Whose will but theirs has put satiety upon man?" he cried.

"And whence the will in me to escape satiety?" I asked triumphantly.

"Again the gods," he laughed. "It is their game we play. They deal and shuffle all the cards . . . and take the stakes. Think not that you have escaped by fleeing from the mad cities. You with your vine-clad hills, your sunsets and your sunrises, your homely fare and simple round of living!

"I've watched you ever since I came. You have not won. You have surrendered. You have made terms with the enemy. You have made confession that you are tired. You have flown the white flag of fatigue. You have nailed up a notice to the effect that life is ebbing down in you. You have run away from life. You have played a trick, a shabby trick. You have balked at the game. You refuse to play. You have thrown your cards under the table and run away to hide, here amongst your hills."

He tossed his straight hair back from his flashing eyes, and scarcely interrupted to roll a long, brown, Mexican cigarette.

"But the gods know. It is an old trick. All the generations of man have tried it . . . and lost. The

gods know how to deal with such as you. To pursue is to possess, and to possess is to be sated. And so you, in your wisdom, have refused any longer to pursue. You have elected surcease. Very well. You will become sated with surcease. You say you have escaped satiety! You have merely bartered it for senility. And senility is another name for satiety. It is satiety's masquerade. Bah!"

"But look at me!" I cried.

Carquinez was ever a demon for haling one's soul out and making rags and tatters of it.

He looked me witheringly up and down.

"You see no signs," I challenged.

"Decay is insidious," he retorted.

"You are rotten ripe."

I laughed and forgave him for his very deviltry. But he refused to be forgiven.

"Do I not know?" he asked. "The gods always win. I have watched men play for years what seemed a winning game. In the end they lost."

"Don't you ever make mistakes?" I asked.

He blew many meditative rings of smoke before replying.

"Yes, I was nearly fooled once. Let me tell you. There was Marvin Fiske. You remember him? And his Dantesque face and poet's soul, singing his chant of the flesh, the very priest of Love? And there was Ethel Baird, whom also you must remember."

"A warm saint," I said.

"That is she! Holy as Love, and sweeter! Just a woman, made for love; and yet—how shall I say?—drenched through with holiness as your own air here is with the perfume of flowers. Well, they married. They played a hand with the gods——"

"And they won, they gloriously won!" I broke in.

Carquinez looked at me pityingly, and his voice was like a funeral bell.

"They lost. They supremely, colossally lost."

"But the world believes otherwise," I ventured coldly.

"The world conjectures. The world

sees only the face of things. But I know. Has it ever entered your mind to wonder why she took the veil, buried herself in that dolorous convent of the living dead?"

"Because she loved him so, and when he died . . ."

Speech was frozen on my lips by Carquinez's sneer.

"A pat answer," he said; "machine-made like a piece of cotton-drill. The world's judgment! And much the world knows about it. Like you, she fled from life. She was beaten. She flung out the white flag of fatigue. And no beleaguered city ever flew that flag in such bitterness and tears.

"Now I shall tell you the whole tale, and you must believe me, for I know. They had pondered the problem of satiety. They loved Love. They knew to the uttermost farthing the value of Love. They loved him so well that they were fain to keep him always, warm and a-thrill in their hearts. They welcomed his coming; they feared to have him depart.

"Love was desire, they held, a delicious pain. He was ever seeking easement, and when he found that for which he sought he died. Love denied was Love alive; Love granted was Love deceased. Do you follow me? They saw it was not the way of life to be hungry for what it has. To eat and still be hungry—man has never accomplished that feat. The problem of satiety. That is it. To have and to keep the sharp famine-edge of appetite at the groaning board. This was their problem, for they loved Love. Often did they discuss it, with all Love's sweet ardors brimming in their eyes, his ruddy blood spraying their cheeks, his voice playing in and out with their voices, now hiding as a tremolo in their throats, and again shading a tone with that ineffable tenderness which he alone can utter.

"How do I know all this? I saw—much. More I learned from her diary. This I found in it, from Fiona MacLeod: 'For, truly, that wandering voice, that twilight-whisper, that breath so dewy-sweet, that flame-winged lute-player

whom none sees but for a moment, in a rainbow shimmer of joy, or a sudden lightning-flare of passion, this exquisite mystery we call Amor, comes, to some rapt visionaries at least, not with a song upon the lips that all may hear, or with blithe viol of public music, but as one wrought by ecstasy, dumbly eloquent with desire.'

"How to keep the flame-winged lute-player with his dumb eloquence of desire? To feast him was to lose him. Their love for each other was a great love. Their granaries were overflowing with plenitude; yet they wanted to keep the sharp famine-edge of their love undulled.

"Nor were they lean little fledglings theorizing on the threshold of love. They were robust and realized souls. They had loved before, with others, in the days before they met; and in those days they had throttled Love with caresses, and killed him with kisses, and buried him in the pit of satiety.

"They were not cold wraiths, this man and woman. They were warm human. They had no Saxon soberness in their blood. The color of it was sunset-red. They glowed with it. Temperamentally theirs was the French joy in the flesh. They were idealists, but their idealism was Gallic. It was not tempered by the chill and somber fluid that for the English serves as blood. There was no stoicism about them. They were Americans, descended out of the English, and yet the refraining and self-denying of the English spirit-groping were not theirs.

"They were all this that I have said, and they were made for joy, only they achieved a concept. A curse on concepts! They played with logic, and this was their logic. But first let me tell you of a talk we had one night. It was of Gautier's Madeline de Maupin. You remember the maid? She kissed once, and once only, and of kisses she would have no more. Not that she found kisses were not sweet, but that she feared with repetition they would cloy. Satiety again! She tried to play without stakes against the gods. Now

this is contrary to a rule of the game the gods themselves have made. Only the rules are not posted over the table. Mortals must play in order to learn the rules.

"Well, to the logic. The man and the woman argued thus: Why kiss once only? If to kiss once were wise, was it not wiser to kiss not at all? Thus could they keep Love alive. Fasting, he would knock forever at their hearts.

"Perhaps it was out of their heredity that they achieved this unholy concept. The breed will out, and sometimes most fantastically. Thus in them did cursed Albion array herself, a scheming wanton, a bold, cold-calculating and artful hussy. After all, I do not know. But this I do know: it was out of their inordinate desire for joy that they forewent joy.

"As he said (I read it long afterward in one of his letters to her): 'To hold you in my arms, close, and yet not close. To yearn for you, and never to have you, and so always to have you.' And she: 'For you to be always just beyond my reach. To be ever attaining you, and yet never attaining you, and for this to last forever, always fresh and new, and always with the first flush upon us!'

"That is not the way they said it. On my lips their love-philosophy is mangled. And who am I to delve into their soul-stuff? I am a frog, on the dank edge of a great darkness, gazing goggle-eyed at the mystery and wonder of their flaming souls.

"And they were right, as far as they went. Everything is good . . . as long as it is unpossessed. Satiety and possession are Death's horses; they run in span.

"And time could only tutor us to eke Our rapture's warmth with custom's after-glow."

"They got that from a sonnet of Alfred Austin's. It was called 'Love's Wisdom.' It was the one kiss of Madeline de Maupin. How did it run?

"Kiss me and part; no farther can we go;  
And better death than we from high to low  
Should dwindle, or decline from strong to weak."

"But they were wiser. They would not kiss and part. They would not kiss at all, and thus they planned to stay at Love's topmost peak. They married. You were in England at the time. And never was there such a marriage. They kept their secret to themselves. I did not know, then. Their rapture's warmth did not cool. Their love burned with increasing brightness. Never was there anything like it. The time passed, the months, the years, and ever the flame-winged lute-player grew more resplendent.

"Everybody marveled. They became the wonderful lovers, and they were greatly envied. Sometimes women pitied her because she was childless; it is the form the envy of such creatures takes.

"And I did not know their secret. I pondered and I marveled. At first I had expected, subconsciously, I imagine, the passing of their love. Then I became aware that it was Time that passed and Love that remained. Then I became curious. What was their secret? What were the magic fetters with which they bound Love to them? How did they hold the graceless elf? What elixir of eternal love had they drunk together as had Tristram and Iseult of old time? And whose hand had brewed the fairy drink?

"As I say, I was curious, and I watched them. They were love-mad. They lived in an unending revel of love. They made a pomp and ceremonial of it. They saturated themselves in the art and poetry of love. No, they were not neurotics. They were sane and healthy, and they were artists. But they had accomplished the impossible. They had achieved deathless desire.

"And I? I saw much of them and their everlasting miracle of love. I puzzled and wondered, and then one day——"

Carquinez broke off abruptly and asked, "Have you ever read 'Love's Waiting Time'?"

I shook my head.

"Page wrote it—Curtis Hidden Page, I think. Well, it was that bit of verse that gave me the clue. One

day, in the window-seat near the big piano—you remember how she could play?

"She used to laugh, sometimes, and doubt whether it was for them I came or for the music. She called me a 'music-sot,' once, a 'sound-debauchee.' What a voice he had! When he sang I believed in immortality, my regards for the gods grew almost patronizing, and I devised ways and means whereby I surely could outwit them and their tricks.

"It was a spectacle for God, that man and woman. Years married and singing love-songs with a freshness virginal as new-born Love himself, with a ripeness and wealth of ardor that young lovers can never know. Young lovers were pale and anemic beside that long-married pair. To see them, all fire and flame and tenderness, at a trembling distance, lavishing caresses of eye and voice with every action, through every silence—their love driving them toward each other, and they withholding like fluttering moths, each to the other a candle-flame, and revolving each about the other in the mad gyrations of an amazing orbit-flight! It seemed, in obedience to some great law of physics, more potent than gravitation and more subtle, that they must corporeally melt each into each there before my very eyes. Small wonder they were called the wonderful lovers.

"I have wandered. Now to the clue. One day in the window-seat I found a book of verse. It opened of itself, betraying long habit, to 'Love's Waiting Time.' The page was thumbed and limp with over-handling, and there I read:

"So sweet it is to stand but just apart,  
To know each other better, and to keep  
The soft, delicious sense of two that  
touch. . . .

"Oh, love, not yet! . . . sweet, let us  
keep our love  
Wrapped round with sacred mystery a while  
Waiting the secret of the coming years,  
That come not yet, not yet . . . some  
time . . . not yet. . . .

"Oh, yet a little while our love may grow!  
When it has blossomed it will haply die.  
Feed it with lipless kisses, let it sleep  
Bedded in dead denial yet some while. . .  
Oh, yet a little while, a little while."

"I folded the book on my thumb and sat there silent and without moving for a long time. I was stunned by the clearness of vision the verse had imparted to me. It was illumination. It was like a bolt of God's lightning in the Pit. They would keep Love, the fickle sprite, the forerunner of young life—young life that is imperative to be born!

"I conned the lines over in my mind—'Not yet, some time'—'Oh, love, not yet'—'Feed it with lipless kisses, let it sleep.' And I laughed aloud, ha! ha! I saw with white vision their blameless souls. They were children. They did not understand. They played with Nature's fire and bedded with a naked sword. They laughed at the gods. They would stop the cosmic sap. They had invented a system, and brought it to the gaming-table of life, and expected to win out. 'Beware!' I cried. 'The gods are behind the table. They make new rules for every system that is devised. You have no chance to win.'

"But I did not so cry to them. I waited. They would learn that their system was worthless and throw it away. They would be content with whatever happiness the gods gave them and not strive to wrest more away.

"I watched. I said nothing. The months continued to come and go, and still the famine-edge of their love grew sharper. Never did they dull it with a permitted love-clasp. They ground and whetted it on self-denial, and sharper and sharper it grew. This went on until even I doubted. Did the gods sleep? I wondered. Or were they dead? I laughed to myself. The man and the woman had made a miracle. They had outwitted God. They had shamed the flesh, and blackened the face of the good Earth Mother. They had played with her fire and not been burned. They were

immune. They were themselves gods, knowing good from evil and tasting not. 'Was this the way gods came to be?' I asked myself. 'I am a frog,' I said. 'But for my mud-lidded eyes, I should have been blinded by the brightness of this wonder I have witnessed. I have puffed myself up with my wisdom and passed judgment upon gods.'

"Yet even in this, my latest wisdom, I was wrong. They were not gods. They were man and woman—soft clay that sighed and thrilled, shot through with desire, thumbbed with strange weaknesses which the gods have not."

Carquinez broke from his narrative to roll another cigarette and to laugh harshly. It was not a pretty laugh; it was like the mockery of a devil, and it rose over and rode the roar of the storm that came muffled to our ears from the crashing outside world.

"I am a frog," he said apologetically. "How were they to understand? They were artists, not biologists. They knew the clay of the studio, but they did not know the clay of which they themselves were made. But this I will say—they played high. Never was there such a game before, and I doubt me if there will ever be such a game again.

"Never was lovers' ecstasy like theirs. They had not killed Love with kisses. They had quickened him with denial. And by denial they drove him on till he was all a-burst with desire. And the flame-winged lute-player fanned them with his warm wings till they were all but swooning. It was the very delirium of love, and it continued undiminished and increasing through the weeks and months.

"They longed and yearned, with all the fond pangs and sweet delicious agonies, with an intensity never felt by lovers before nor since.

"And then one day the drowsy gods ceased nodding. They aroused and looked at the man and woman who had made a mock of them. And the man and woman looked into each other's eyes one morning and knew that

something was gone. It was the flame-winged one. He had fled, silently, in the night, from their anchorites' board.

"They looked into each other's eyes and knew that they did not care. Desire was dead. Do you understand? Desire was dead. And they had never kissed. Not once had they kissed. Love was gone. They would never yearn and burn again. For them there was nothing left—no more tremblings and flutterings and delicious anguishes, no more throbbing and pulsing, and sighing and song. Desire was dead. It had died in the night, on a couch cold and unattended; nor had they witnessed its passing. They learned it for the first time in each other's eyes.

"The gods may not be kind, but they are often merciful. They had twirled the little ivory ball and swept the stakes from the table. All that remained were the man and woman gazing into each other's cold eyes. And then he died. That was the mercy. Within the week Marvin Fiske was dead—you remember the accident. And in her diary, written at this time, I long afterward read Mitchell Kennerley's:

"There was not a single hour We might have kissed and did not kiss."

"Oh, the irony of it!" I cried out. And Carquinez, in the firelight a veritable Mephistopheles in velvet jacket, fixed me with his black eyes.

"And they won, you said? The world's judgment! I have told you, and I know. They won as you are winning, here in your hills."

"But you," I demanded hotly; "you with your orgies of sound and sense, with your mad cities and madder frolics—bethink you that you win?"

He shook his head slowly. "Because you with your sober bucolic regime, lose, is no reason that I should win. We never win. Sometimes we think we win. That is a little pleasantry of the gods."



## AN EXPLANATION

By Frederick Orin Bartlett

**A**FTER Roy Nelson's death—he was killed while reporting the Bond street fire—the little world of her friends wondered why she took it so much to heart that it was over a year before they could induce her to be sensible and marry Wilson. Roy had been only a reporter on a daily paper, and consequently had been in no way a suitable match for the prettiest and wealthiest debutante in P—. Their engagement, for she had pledged herself to him, although it had never been publicly announced, was the result of what her friends claimed to be only a school-girl romance and was decidedly against the wishes of her parents. Still, as an only child they had given a reluctant consent and soon after, on the strength of this, had induced her to travel. Roy never saw her again. During the next year I imagine constant pressure was brought to bear on her until, in sheer desperation, she wrote that last letter.

I will give her credit for making as good a fight as her weak self was capable of. She was in no way worthy of him. Now I wish to make it clear, as a mere matter of justice to my chum, that she had won the heart of as honest, sincere and kindly a man as God ever made. He was my working-mate and my room-mate from the time he came into newspaper work. We toiled in the same rut, fought the young man's fight together, and shared our pleasures. I never expect to meet again so honest a chum, so big-hearted a gentleman or a man who loved more intensely or more vitally. When he died he left a big hole in my life. It is there yet.

These letters arrived the day after

the accident, and I have picked at random from them. In doing this I am aware that I am taking a great liberty, but just as in his lifetime I was sometimes forced to save him from himself at the risk of his friendship, so now I am taking a greater risk for the sake of proving his honesty. I wouldn't be a friend if I didn't. These letters are not great, as literature, but they are red blood, every word of them, and they show how a man may love. They were written mostly with a lead-pencil and on all sorts of paper; the gray, red-lined leaves from his note-book, the yellow office scribbling paper, hotel note-paper, court paper, police forms, and even the backs of menus and concert programmes. She was in his life every moment of the waking day and, in return, he tried to make his life vivid and real to her.

This was written on the official note-paper of the *Times* office, which we have to pilfer from the city editor's desk:

KIT DEAR:

It is but an hour since the boat bearing you away from me left the dock. I am back again in the office with the memory of last evening, of that last hour, of that last hand-clasp whirling through my brain. You were so good to me—gave me so much of your love! Dear You—tender You. I did not sleep last night. I wouldn't sleep. It would not have been right to have blotted out even for a few hours that last evening. So I lighted my pipe and, sitting in the dark, I listened over again to every word you uttered, saw over again every look, and kissed you



over again every kiss. And I felt again the tears that came into your eyes. Ah, dear, faithful, kindly eyes—I thank you for those tears. They told me so much. Had I needed further belief, I did not after that. Eyes are so honest. So I sat until dawn and then went out into the morning and walked toward the red glow in the east. I did not feel tired. I do not now. I am ready for big things. I should like to get a story that would take two or three days and nights out of me—a story that would need a clear head and twice the energy of a normal man. I would show 'em!

You are forever making me distort things—dear You. The petty, the trivial, the sordid which I know well enough are around me, I cannot see any more; the good, the big, the brave, the decent fill my whole life. Bill says I look like a religious enthusiast. (I am, Bill. I find he was always mentioning me in his letters.)

Down the corridor I hear the cricket-like chirp of the telegraph instruments; in the next room a bunch of the fellows are arguing and playing horse; in the alley below there is a babel of newsboys' voices; and over all, the odor of printer's ink and the fumes of acid from the art department. I hear it only as a man half-awake. All I am conscious of is June—and You.

You are so much alike—You and June. Both of you sweeten the world—as the dew does the earth; you are both full of life and song; both steady and big of heart. You can both be trusted. And it does a man good to trust. One thing alone I missed before You came: the privilege of trusting; the right to say there was, in my life, one fixed point as certain as the magnetic North. And how I trust you! As a blind girl does her mother guide—as a nun trust her God.

I shall not miss you, Kit. You are too much with me—too much a part of me. Why, look, I can close my eyes here in this newspaper office, where the big tragedies of life are bought and sold and measured and weighed like cloth—right here where life is at

its crudest—here where sentiment is laughed to scorn—I can close my eyes and see You and feel the pound of your heart.

I've just been assigned to cover the police-court this morning. I don't like it. I want to get out in the open.

Roy.

Sometimes he would write as many as three or four letters a day—just so that she might know better and more intimately his life. Many of these notes—for they might be only a page or so long—are nothing but simple, faithful descriptions of where he happened to be.

This same day he wrote on a piece of court paper:

DEAR YOU:

I am sitting in the municipal court waiting for them to finish the routine business. Routine. Yes, that is what they call it, and yet in that routine the very future of men and women is being decided. The clerk, a tall, thin-faced man with a phonographic voice, calls a name and in answer to it some poor beggar stumbles from the rear of the cage and faces the judge. The latter looks bored. He has seen so much of this. In a monotonous voice the clerk reads the indictment so fast that one can scarcely understand it, ending with:

"Do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

The question frightens the man. He turns his eyes upon the court-room in mute appeal for help. The question is repeated in a tone that seems to suggest that it will be repeated until answered, with the regularity of a machine adjusted to do a certain thing interminably.

The prisoner, nudged by the guard, mumbles "Not guilty," and is shoved aside to make room for another. The officers are not intentionally cruel; most of them are big-hearted men with families, but they see so much of this that they get blunted. They become like surgeons who, when operating, look upon the body unemotionally, viewing it only as a broken bit of

machinery. The lawyers, the newspaper men, the court habitués, all get that way. Even the women probation officers do. It is the judicial frame of mind, I suppose. But it is heartless. It is dangerous to look upon one side of life too long.

Were it not for You I should get that way myself. I know it. At the end of a long, weary forenoon I have caught myself crying petulantly, as some lawyer talked on for some poor fellow's freedom, "Oh, shut up, and let him be sentenced!"

The prisoner had ceased to be a human being to me. He was only an irritating obstruction to my comfort. Then You have come to me, and I have come to myself. You keep me clear, Kit.

The first case has been called for trial. Good-bye.

Roy.

This letter was evidently written after he had received word of her safe passage:

DEAR YOU:

I had been all day heart hungry, when your brief letter came. I had not feared for your safety. My brain will not allow me to conceive of any harm coming to you. But, heart of me, I had grown hungry for the sound of your voice. I hear your letters. And so that the music of this one might not be marred by the rumble and whirr of the city noises, I walked far out into the country. I was alone. I had to be alone. Bill knew it somehow and went his own way. Bill knows all those things. The moon was nearly full, and the air was warm and flower-perfumed. I threw myself down on the grass and read over the note once more. You did not tell me much, but I read on for long. Then I lay sprawled out on my back and looked up into the spaces between the stars and dreamed of You. Oh, thou fairest among women, it is a privilege to dream of You! I kiss you as often as I wish—but always on the forehead in that pure white space between the eyes. It

is for you to give your lips, but I claim that spot as my own.

When I returned I read the Song of Solomon. But I fear I was sacrilegious. I sang it to you, and of you. "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast dove's eyes within thy locks; thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead."

I do not believe that is an allegory. It is too human. It is a great, red-blooded love-song—nothing else. . . .

I will not quote more of this letter. The next note was written on the back of a menu card:

I am sitting at a business men's banquet. They have wine and dined, and now they are talking platitudes. I need use only half an ear—just to make sure they do not forget themselves and say something worth while, or something they will be sorry for. They are a brisk, clean-looking lot of men—most of them beyond middle life. They have all the money they can use, and yet they are discussing means for getting more.

They look upon me and the other newspaper men with some scorn, and yet when they glance in our direction to see if we are taking any of it down. It would surprise some of them if they knew they did not have, all of them put together, money enough to induce a poor newspaper hack to exchange lives with them. They look very solid, content, secure. But they don't know what it means to live—really live. They wouldn't be rich if they did.

Right in here the speaker said something about the mayor, something that will not look well in print. He doesn't realize it, but the president does, and he will come over before we go and ask us to cut it out. But we won't; it's news.

You see he took her with him everywhere. How thoroughly she must have known this man's love! That is what makes it seem so cruel of her.

Here is another, written in a scrawling hand in his note-book, as though it had been scribbled beneath an electric light:

KIT DEAR:

I am assigned to the death watch, and I am alone on the street corner. It is nearly midnight. Opposite me rises a brick building, and soft lights are burning within. They will burn all night because Senator B—— is in there, dying. The authorities will not tell us anything about the sick man's condition, but I know it is serious, because one after another his wife and daughters have raced up in carriages. Dr. A——, the great surgeon, just arrived.

I can almost see that little room where the old man lies gasping for breath—the white bed, the figures kneeling about it in the dim light, the coolness of the surgeon as he takes the pulse, and the little, unconcerned, white-capped nurse. The senator has led a notable life, and now he is near the end of it. In a few hours he will be so much clay. And here am I out here, a poor hanger-on of a newspaper man, well and happy. My, but it is good to live and to love! The two are the same. I'd like to ask that old man what he considers the best he has got out of life. He would gasp, "Love." And so I, just plain I, out here in the dark, have already the best of what he had. Dear, You gave me that. Were it not for You I should be lonesome out here and discontented that I had to stand on the curb like a beggar. Now I am glad, because it makes me think pleasant thoughts. . . .

I am writing this on the car. The senator has just died, and I am on my way back to the office. Good night. I am glad you ran across Wilson. I used to know him a little in college.

Roy.

This was on the back of a concert programme:

You:

I am dizzy with love of you. My ears ring with soft music which tells

of you. The 'cellist sobs of you, the violinist sighs of you, and the soloist has sung of you. She sang of Love—of Love. And you are Love.

Roy.

And this was on the back of a police form:

KIT DEAR:

I am at Police Station 3, waiting for the details of a shooting affair. I suppose it is a case of jealousy, for it is down in the Italian quarter. They are a hot-blooded race. I have never been able to grasp all that jealousy seems to mean to men. Now and then I glimpse its meaning, but it always seems to me as though I would rather kill myself than the other fellow—if he had been fair in his wooing.

I envy Wilson his opportunities for listening to the operas with you. Remember me to him. When I return to my room, Kit, I am going to spend the evening with you.

The officer is coming, so good-bye for a little.

Roy.

It was late in the Fall when I first began to notice that Roy was not quite himself. He seemed to have lost much of that unfaltering happiness that I, somewhat of a moody body, had learned to depend upon. One night after he had received a letter from her he asked me to walk out with him. I was surprised, for he always liked to take these walks alone. We went into the country for miles and we did not speak a word to each other. When we returned he said quietly, "Thank you, Bill." I did not like what I caught in his voice.

This was written in December:

You:

My, how the wind howls and tears and rips! I am glad you are not here to be whipped by it. I am sitting in the office of the tow-boat company, waiting for news of a schooner which I fear is lost. From the windows I can see the wracked ocean where the heavy

green waves are shredded before half formed. The salt spume is driven against the window-panes. Around the air-tight stove a half-dozen weather-tanned fishermen are telling yarns of past wrecks.

If those poor devils are out there among the waves, they would better be dead. Think of having the cold salt ice sprayed down your throat while fighting for life! Yet they will fight on and on and on. It makes this room seem very comfortable.

I can only see how they have the strength to fight if they love. I could fight against the cold, the salt, the wind, the water, but it would be to get to You.

So Wilson is going on to Berlin with you. He is a very lucky man, but I know a luckier one. I'd rather be here with your love than in Berlin without it. God bless you, dear one.

Roy.

One night we were sitting in the room together. He had just sent his Christmas present on to her. We had both gone a bit hungry to get it and he was without a Winter overcoat. We newspaper men do not earn very much, and—well, we spend more than we ought. It is hard to save, in this work.

He had received a letter from her that day. We sat in the dark listening to the wind, and I was somewhat lonesome, as a single man will get toward the holidays. Finally he said:

"Bill?"

"Aye."

"What a miserable cheating dog Time is."

I did not answer.

"Always treacherous, always tearing down, always destroying, always killing."

After another long silence:

"She's in Berlin."

Then another silence.

"Wilson's there."

We sat on for an hour. Then I heard:

"God, Bill!"

I took his hand a second and then turned in. I did not sleep well, because he tossed the whole night long.

Now I come to the last letter. I found it unfinished on his desk the night of the fire. It was written in a great, school-boy scrawl, hardly legible. And—I sent it to her:

You:

I won't believe it. You'll have to tell me over again. You'll have to tell me in cold blood. Say, "Roy, I do not love you any more. I wish you to go." Say that—just that.

But you can't, girl. Good God, you can't. You're part of me—You're Me. I can't reach in and pull my own heart out. The only way I could leave you would be to leave everything, everybody. You don't ask me to do that, do you? Why, it's only five months, You—only five months since I felt your heart, saw your soul in your eyes. The eyes can't lie. They said you loved me. There's something wrong. I'm going to borrow the money and come over and see you. I'm going to start tomorrow.

I feel like a kid that wakes up in the night and gropes for an arm, not finding it. I don't know as you can read this. My fingers are all numb. Dear Kit, I . . .

The letter stopped there. The third alarm came in and he was sent out in a hurry. The next day they found his body in the ruins.

I don't know how it happened. I refuse to know.

But she knows.



# THE COLONEL WITH THE UNSTEADY LEGS

By W. H. G. Wyndham Martyn

IT was a few minutes after midnight on an evening of early Summer when George Clayton sauntered through some of the less frequented paths of Central Park in a perspiring effort to become cool. Like Young Lochinvar, he had come out of the West; and the still oppressiveness of the metropolis made him vow to seek a mountain or seashore resort on the morrow.

His attention was presently directed to a red pin-point of light which seemed to spring from the middle of the path at a distance of some twenty yards ahead; and it was not until he came nearer that he saw it was caused by the cigar of an elderly man in evening dress who was sitting smoking. The very fact of the continued smoking banished his first idea that the man might be the victim of an accident, and there was no indication of intoxication in the smoker. Clayton was a little puzzled as to whether or not he should proffer assistance, and while in this hesitant mood the other addressed him.

"I admit," said the man on the path, "that appearances are against me."

"Not at all," Clayton answered politely.

"Permit me to differ from you," returned the other with equal courtesy. "Three very proper reasons might suggest themselves to you to account for my attitude. You might, for example, think it my custom to sit here on warm nights in June. Dismiss this from your mind at once. You might be tempted to think that I am a health-culture faddist and adopt this posture

from hygienic reasons. This explanation is as little true as the first. The other reason that would suggest itself to your mind is that nature denied me the usual complement of legs. I beg you to observe that my legs are as firmly attached to my body as your own."

"Is my curiosity as to the real reason pardonable?" said Clayton, with a pleasant smile.

"I owe you the explanation, sir," returned the elderly gentleman, removing his opera hat and displaying a high, bald forehead. "In fact, I must offer an apology for the shortcomings of my legs."

"Your legs?" repeated Clayton.

"My head," the other made answer, "is capable of resisting the most sustained attacks of what temperance advocates very rightly call the 'Demon Drink.' But my legs," he pointed to the offending extremities with scorn, "my legs are of so intemperate a nature that they refused this night to carry my blameless body."

"Is it possible?" said the other, with a show of interest.

"I dined tonight," continued the sitting man, "with a very old friend, and, dismissing my carriage at an entrance to the Park, determined to walk across it and meet my man at another gate, where he has probably been waiting an hour or more."

"Can you explain the phenomenon?" asked Clayton with a gravity equaling that of the old man.

"I fear," said the other, "that my legs were changed one evening when I was so ill-advised as to attend an

occult manifestation. From that night, when spirits of men from all parts of the globe were said to be materializing, I have been conscious of a change. The legs I wear are, I am convinced, the property of some other man; and, sir," here he became emphatic, "of a man with corns. Is it fair I should suffer from the defects of another man?"

Clayton shook his head in sympathy. "Can I assist you in any way?" he hazarded at length.

"Unless you do," returned the other, "I must wait until a better Samaritan passes along. Once on my feet, I am as active as a man of half my years; but once in this position and no effort of my own can avail."

Clayton bent down and, putting an arm round the old man's shoulders, helped him to his feet, and found that he was very tall and thin.

"Good," said the tall, thin man. "You notice I can walk perfectly."

He walked a few paces and then paused and looked at his legs.

"There are times," he said, "when I take a great pleasure in getting the better of my legs, but their behavior is a matter of deep concern."

"Have you ever considered amputation?" asked Clayton.

The old man pondered on the suggestion for a moment.

"It seems rather a drastic remedy," he said at length. "To live with both legs in the grave would render me, I fear, a prey to melancholy."

A few moments later the old man pointed out a carriage. "There's my man," he said.

Clayton noticed that the horses, chestnuts, were of great value and he now saw that the blazing ruby the owner wore in his shirt-front was worth a fortune. By the side of the carriage the old man turned to Clayton.

"Have you anything important to do tonight?" he demanded.

"No," said the other; "I was just strolling to get cool."

"Then become still more cool by driving home with me," said his companion.

"A fifteen-mile drive tonight will do you good; and I will send you back as soon as you like after breakfast. I am anxious to prove to you that I am not the intemperate man the unobservant might suppose. Be frank with me. Have you any objection to spending a few hours with me in one of the nicest places on Long Island?"

"I shall enjoy it immensely," said Clayton impulsively. "The city will be unbearable tomorrow."

He seated himself in the carriage, and the fast horses were soon in the open country. His host, who gave the name of Colonel Trevillian, proved to be an eccentric but witty old traveler who had hunted big game all over the globe, and returned with the most decided opinions on men and things. As they drove further into the country he made heroic but hardly successful efforts to remain awake, and presently relapsed into slumber, leaving Clayton to wonder over the unusualness of the episode. But he was young enough to be rash, and rich enough to care for nobody's opinion; and if the colonel turned out to be as pleasant a companion as he promised, then Clayton thought he would be in luck's way.

They were toiling slowly up an exceptionally steep hill, when the coachman turned around and addressed him respectfully.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, "but was it the colonel's legs again?"

"Yes," returned Clayton. "Is this their usual behavior?"

"About once a year, sir," said the man. "I'm sure I'm very glad it was a gentleman who helped him and not a tough. Last year he lost his watch just because he couldn't get up on his feet; his head is always sober."

The horses broke into a trot, and so the conversation ended.

The colonel's house was surrounded by gardens and a very high wall, and seemed in the moonlight to be of considerable size. The hall and study were furnished in traveler's taste, and a tigerskin which Clayton particularly admired caused the colonel to indulge in hunter's tales on the piazza, while



his guest sought to slake an abnormal thirst.

It was after three o'clock when Clayton found himself in his bedroom, and he fell asleep almost immediately. His sleep was not a long one, however, for the night heat awoke him and he made for the jug of water he had seen on the table, only to find it empty. The colonel's insistence that he should make himself perfectly at home was sufficient excuse, he felt, for a raid on the siphons of carbonic and seltzer he remembered were on the library-table, and with the only three matches he could possess himself of he passed on down the silent stairs. At their foot, on his return, the last match went out, and he began to climb cautiously to his chamber. Although it was growing light outside, the shutters were all tightly closed and the darkness intense; the door seemed to have gone, and try as he might he could not determine in which direction he ought to proceed. His ignorance of the extent of the colonel's household prevented him from opening other doors which he felt in the gloom as he sought for his own. The thought that he might be discovered, his excuse ignored, and suspected of burglary, rendered him extremely uncomfortable, and he tried in vain to accustom his eyes to the darkness. But the prospect of being found wandering in a strange house with a siphon in his hand so little commended itself to his taste that he determined to brave the possible indignation of a slumbering stranger and open the first door he came to. But as this resolve was formed, so the doors began to elude him, and he finally fell down three steps upon a fur rug, and lay there breathless until the sound of voices near at hand aroused him.

It was not the colonel's voice, but he thanked his fate it was a man's, and groped toward a door from which light issued faintly through a narrow crack, and looked in.

The room was evidently a study, for a mahogany desk was littered with papers and there were traces of

typewritten manuscript on the floor. But he forgot this in his amazement at seeing Colonel Trevillian tied hand and foot to a carved Chinese chair, while standing over him was a heavily built, dark man, whose face Clayton could not see.

For a moment Clayton thought of snares, and the folly of a millionaire accepting strange invitations; but he had formed such a favorable opinion of his host that he feared no trap, and only cursed his lack of weapons and longed for the siphon which had escaped him in his fall down the three steps. He shrank back into the shadow as the dark man turned round and reached for a cigar, and could see that his was a determined face and a ruthless one. He lighted his cigar carefully and then, with an unpleasant smile, turned to the colonel.

"To treat you thus roughly, my dear uncle," he observed, "is positively painful to me; but before any feelings of philanthropy should come the sense of the dignity of one's own person. I feel assured in my own mind that had I not knocked you down and bound you—raw beef, by the way, is an excellent thing for a damaged eye—you would doubtless have done the same to me."

"I would have shot you with considerable pleasure, you hound," said the colonel in a tense voice.

The dark man shook his head gravely. "At your age," he said, "you should not betray animosity. Physicians say it weakens the heart; and besides, it is unnecessary. Now just consider the facts of the case. You are said to be worth three millions, while I have not three hundred; and, in justice, you should leave me at least a million, for, after all, I am your nearest relative. What do you do instead? You put me down for one hundred. This can only be construed into an intentional insult."

"It wouldn't be anything if I had not promised your mother to do something for you. I shall cut you off with one dollar now."

The colonel strove ineffectually to free himself from the cords that bound

him, while the dark man looked on amused.

"It's curious," he observed at length, "how a man can so utterly misunderstand another's motives. You suppose that just because you caught me in the act of substituting a forged will for the genuine, I am going to own myself beaten and sneak like a cur from your hospitable door? My dear and respected uncle, give me credit for better intentions. I have planned this visit for three months and what precautions could be taken, these I took. I found out that your invaluable butler, after a lifetime of high-living, had developed appendicitis and will be operated upon tomorrow at three o'clock. I have learned, too, that your other man snores in so unmusical a manner as to disturb your slumber, and, in consequence, you have sent him to make night hideous in the coachman's cottage. As you have no female servants, this leaves a clear field to me; and I am able to enjoy your conversation without being in constant fear of interruption. Of course, there remained that dour Scot, Brown, who prowls nightly about the grounds. Poor Brown, he was an honest if stubborn man." The dark man sighed in sympathy and mixed himself a whisky-and-seltzer.

"Was?" repeated the colonel, "was an honest man?"

"How well you catch the tense," smiled the nephew. "I was compelled to strike Brown on the head with considerable force. He brought it on himself and is now lying like the babes in the wood under a pall of leaves. Hardly leaves, perhaps, considering it is June, but the simile will serve."

"My God!" cried the colonel. "Have you murdered Brown?"

"Oh, no!" said his nephew. "Brown will live to exemplify the fact that Nature has her recompenses for abnormal thickness of skull. He will awake and find himself as securely bound as you are, but in addition he will find himself gagged."

He looked at a cut on his knuckle. "I wish," he said, showing the wound to his uncle, "you would not employ

men with prominent teeth. But all this talk is wide of the mark. I want you to give me your word of honor as a soldier and a gentleman that if I untie you, you will let the will stand as it is. I have taken the million you bequeathed to General Owen and given it to myself. I could never bear Owen, but the will is otherwise unaltered. If you give me your word, I will give mine, as a gentleman and soldier of fortune, never to look upon your face again."

The colonel, his face purple with rage, spluttered incoherently.

"I don't quite catch your meaning," said the other man, "but hadn't you better think it over for five minutes? Meanwhile, I will have another of these excellent cigars."

The colonel made a great effort to regain his composure.

"And suppose I refuse?" he said.

"Before answering that," replied the other, "I will tell you that if I do not get money I shall be posted at my club and must necessarily leave the haunts I love. If you allow the will I have made to stand, I shall have no difficulty in borrowing. As it is, the usurers insult via the office-boy."

"And if I still refuse?" snapped the colonel.

"Then," said the nephew calmly, "I shall not have so long to wait for my million. This is not melodrama. I must have money or I might as well commit suicide. You are seventy and I am thirty-eight. Your three-score and ten years are up and you ought not to think death a great evil." He waved his hand impatiently. "I did not come here to talk about life, death and compromises. Will you accept my conditions?"

The colonel did not answer. Instead he tried not to smile, but the nephew detected instantly the change in his manner.

"I really can't think," he said, "that my offer is one at which to smile."

The colonel chuckled. "It isn't," he said. But he persisted in smiling.

His nephew was seated on the corner of the table, his arms hanging by his

side. It flashed across his mind that his uncle's eccentricity had passed into madness as he had often prophesied, when he was aware that his hands were being mysteriously seized, and an instant later he was fully conscious that they were so securely bound as to render them useless.

"For a criminal," said the man in pajamas urbanely, "you seem to be a trifle careless."

The colonel laughed aloud. "This gentleman's appearance may explain my hilarity," he told his nephew. "I watched him prepare to bind you with a silken cord. I don't know when I have enjoyed a spectacle so much!" He turned to the other man. "Go through his pockets, Clayton; he has a gun somewhere."

Clayton produced a 38-caliber revolver, and then unbound the colonel, who rose to his great height, stretched, and mixed himself a drink.

The attitude of the beaten man was sublime in its way. He did not struggle or curse, but submitted with the evil smile still on his face.

"You are quite the god out of the machine," he said to Clayton. "I must remember your name."

"That's kind of you," said the other. "Why should you take the trouble?"

"I should like to repay you for your courtesies of tonight. And besides," he added, with a smile that was almost a sneer, "you have a frank young face."

"Your instincts do you credit," said Clayton, with equal urbanity, "but won't the enforced meditation on the Simple Life of Sing Sing curtail your activities, for a time at all events?"

"That is where you are wrong," retorted the other. "I may have lost the regard of a cherished and only uncle, and the prospect of a million dollars, but I have not won the riverside resort you speak of. Know, my dear Clayton, that Colonel Trevillian takes so much pride in the stainless honor of his name that he will neither prosecute his nephew nor allow his name to be posted at his clubs. He fears the power of caricature which distorts famous faces."

The colonel looked at his rescuer almost piteously.

"It's true," he said. "How can I let the world know of my disgrace?"

"You see what a thing it is to be burdened with such excessive pride of family," said the nephew, with a smile. "Indeed, it is at times a burden almost too much for my uncle's legs."

A flush overspread the elder man's face, but he said nothing, and turned instead to the open safe drawer where was lying the forged will.

"So much for your million!" he observed as he tore it into bits. Then he took the genuine document from the inner pocket of the bound man's coat and replaced it in the safe, which he locked. Then he untied the knots which fastened the man.

"Now," he said, "perhaps we will take the shortest cut to the lodge."

His nephew stretched his arms and yawned. There was something admirable in his self-possession.

"A good idea," he agreed. "I am not for the joys of country life."

In silence they walked across the fields that led to the gate, until the nephew paused by a clump of bushes and raised a hand, enforcing silence. "What's that noise?" he said.

"Come! come!" cried the colonel. "have you never heard a bird before? We waste time."

It was too early for the lodge-keeper or his wife to be abroad, and only Clayton and the colonel witnessed the departure of the intruder, who continued to gaze about him with placid interest.

"Clayton," he said, "I hardly think this will be our last meeting. My dear uncle, good-bye."

He took a few steps along the white road, and then paused.

"By the way," he said, "that strange sound which you wrongly attributed to the early bird endeavoring to find the worm was really poor Brown trying to get the gag out of his mouth. You might as well attend to him after breakfast."

With that he swung down the lane with easy stride, and Clayton watched

him curiously. Then his eye followed the gaunt figure of the older man as he ran toward the spot where the faithful Brown lay. And as he followed to

render what assistance he could he remarked, as many another had done before him, and will after him, that it was a strange world.



## THE SECRET

By Theodosia Garrison

TWO passed me in the lane today,  
 So close they seemed but one,  
 When all the noon was sweet with May  
 And tremulous with sun.

So joined their hands, so near their eyes  
 They gave less thought to me  
 Than to the drifting butterflies  
 That bore them company.

They glanced not where I stood apart,  
 I heard them speak no word;  
 Yet something trembled in my heart  
 As though a dead thing stirred;

As though an unremembered song  
 Thrilled somewhere in my brain,  
 Or eyes forgotten over-long  
 Looked in mine own again.

Ah, well! I lingered in the shade;  
 They passed me in the sun—  
 A stalwart lad, a little maid  
 So close they seemed but one.

I know not what they bade me know,  
 Yet surely once I knew,  
 But I have lost the secret now  
 And nowhere find the clue.



FIVE girls in a fashionable boarding-school have formed a society to protest earnestly against the new spelling. They sign themselves Alysse, Mayme, Grayce, Kathryne and Carrye.

# DESIGNER AND BUILDER

By Bliss Carman

IT is very easy to be an impractical dreamer. There have been seers and prophets in all ages, but there have also been ineffectual visionaries who wasted their lives in idle speculation and moody discontent, lost among the clouds. It is easy, too, to be absorbed wholly in practical affairs and put dreams aside altogether, as many men do from sheer faintness of heart at the prospect of unremitting toil which existence demands. But it is not easy to be both inspired and practical at the same time, for that implies a nice balance of qualities under the supervision of an unbiased judgment.

It is easy to build castles in the air; one may spend whole days in that seductive occupation; and it is almost equally easy to lay one brick upon another without giving thought to anything except the mortar between them. But he is master of the world who can both plan and achieve, who keeps his plans within the bounds of the achievable, and brings his achievements up to the requirements of his plans. His castles are projected in Spain, but he sees them reproduced, perhaps after long years and perdurable patience, from the solid ground before his eyes.

In "The Last Ride Together" you may read:

What hand and brain went even paired?  
What heart alike conceived and dared?  
What act proved all its thought had been?

And it is true and natural that some must be preëminently designers, and others preëminently builders; yet each must have a modicum of the capacity of the other, for the best efficiency and

coöperation, and for rendering the best service to the world. We must specialize, indeed, for the finest productivity in the liberal arts and industries. But it is not good for a man to specialize so excessively as to lose his breadth of sympathy and understanding, and impair the normal completeness of his nature. For after all, the arts exist for man, and not man for the arts. For the finest art in the world, the art of life, demands that whenever our pursuits begin to work more harm than benefit we should abandon them or at least be less headlong in their continuance.

When it comes to the consideration of personal culture and a wise precept of conduct, the sanest standards must make us keep our ideals and actions in close accord. Ideals are good, but they are not all equally good, and those are best for our life here and now which can be realized to some degree by our honest efforts. It is a dangerous habit to indulge in dreams which we can never hope to accomplish—as if a mariner on the Atlantic should occupy his time in plotting courses among the South Sea Islands. There can never take place any divergence between the different parts of a man's nature without harm coming to him thereby. To lead one life in dream and another in reality is a fatal duplicity, innocent though it seem.

It is in youth that we are most subject to the seductions of vague, magnificent and elusive ideals. We are carried away then by the splendor of looming possibilities, sustained by enormous ambitions, and impatient of the plodding prosaic measures of

our sires. We scoff lightly at the methods of prudence and hold practicality in imperious contempt. Life is all poetry to us, and we are very willing to take its intoxication of beauty, without asking for its fundamental structure of reasonableness and excellence. Whatever is humdrum or rational seems to partake too much of the earth for our fastidious fancy. We chafe at caution, demur at the authority of tradition, and are eager to disrupt the world in the confident belief that we could

Remold it nearer to the heart's desire.

As we mature, however, we make a juster estimate of things; we perceive that, however faulty this world may be, it is the only one we have, and it is folly not to make the best of it. To that end we come to value ideals in proportion to their applicability to life. We see that they are of little use unless they can be made practical, and we begin to select from our vasty dreams those which can be translated into action or art. We learn that the soul must condescend to live, and that its daily task is the merging of the ideal in the actual and the gradual transforming of the actual into the ideal. Dreamful youth grows aware that this is the sanction of life; lays aside its noble scorn of the impractical; submits itself to the stern inevitable law; and pours its energies, not into the pursuit of vain and futile imaginings, but into the accomplishment of possible and immediate aims. As Thoreau remarked, youth gets together the materials for a bridge to the moon, and maturity uses them to build a wood-shed.

In thus resigning our too exclusive occupation with dreams we are not recreant to any lofty obligation; we are, in fact, progressing upon the pathway of perfection. We are merely discriminating among our ideals, discarding the less practical, in order that the more practical may be cultivated and realized. The garden of the mind needs care and weeding and thinning out, just as an onion bed does. If the

story of the cosmos shows any intelligible significance or trend or purpose, it is surely this—a constant embodying of thoughts in actions, a constant attempt to crown longing with fulfillment, a continuous and unflagging effort to bring about the realization of ideals. This is the one strand of revelation which runs through all history of nature and man, and we are only in close relationship with universal tendencies when we are engaged in some such employment—in putting our convictions into practice, in making our dreams come true. Whatever there is of beauty in the world must have been imagined before it was wrought; whatever there is of truth must have been postulated before it was verified; whatever there is of good must have been desired before it was brought about. And whatever there is to be of these things in the future for the benefit of men can only come to pass in the same way, by being imagined first and then made actual.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed  
of good, shall exist,  
Not its semblance, but itself,

says Browning; and we are not properly men until we give ourselves without reserve to the furthering of that great cosmic scheme, adding our energies to the energy of the universe, in helping beauty to be born, and knowledge to appear, and the longing spirit to find happiness and satisfaction in creative activities.

Nature herself produces phenomena with a seemingly wasteful prodigality, but we have hardly her time or resource at our command, and we must economize all our endeavors and not spend too many hours in weaving patterns of ineffectual dream. Many a man misses success only by a hair's breadth, so little it takes to deflect destiny and turn good fortune into defeat. He may be full of kindness and unselfish ambitions and splendid imaginings, and yet never have realized the futility of a life given over to contemplation devoid of deeds. He spends hours in musing upon schemes of happiness and perfection,



only to feel the profound dissatisfaction which must come with such a surfeit of inaction. He grows more and more timid and distrustful of his powers the more he abstains from energy. He gives his will no exercise, and falls daily into a state of feverish hesitation or supine despondency. He deludes himself with childish dreams of unaccomplishable greatness, while all about him lie actual benefits only waiting to be appropriated. He misses the substance of life in reaching for the shadow, and passes joyless years simply because he does not know where joy resides. The materials from which happiness can be built are ready to his hand, only needing an intelligent will to put them in place; but he is too absorbed in contemplating the plan of his airy architecture to pay heed to the necessities of construction. So his whole life crumbles in failure for want of industry and a sense of proportion.

The fate of the man without ideals, on the other hand, is hardly more to be envied. He is so engrossed in the execution of business or affairs that he takes no time to look upon his work and question whether it is good or not; he brings to it no spring of delight and but little ambition; he has no thought beyond the gain of the moment; he is too dull to see that his work can be anything more than mere drudgery, or that he himself is not the mere sport of cruel fate. Without a touch of the divine dream of perfection, he can hardly be entrusted to execute the commonest task as it should be executed, while for large enterprises he is unfitted altogether. But I must think

that such men are not as common as we might suppose, and that there are few indeed who are not illumined at times by fitful gleams of inspiration.

There are many, however, belonging to a third class, who have both industry and imagination, a genius for practical activity as well as for ideals. And it will sometimes happen that these characters, aware of two diverse trends of nature in themselves, may attempt to lead two lives, one of everyday prosaic affairs, and one of poetizing and fancy, as if the unreal splendors of the one could compensate them for the actual difficulties and discouragement of the other. It is the same pathetic fallacy that leads us to imagine a heaven where the ordinary activities of the world do not obtain, where all our human powers are in some mysterious way laid aside without detracting from our capacity for enjoyment, where we are to dwell in a state of passive beatitude, yet without any opportunity to employ those energies and capacities whose exercise forms our only happiness in this world.

The incongruity of this idea does not strike us, nor does it often occur to us to make an earthly paradise by putting our ideals into practice. Yet this is our only sure hold upon felicity. The only pure satisfaction we shall find in life lies in bringing our dreams to pass, in giving material form and actual existence to what we have imagined of good and fair. This is the part of the true idealist, the heroic dreamer, the man worthy to dwell in a world once trod by the indomitable spirits of old.



## WITH DUE APOLOGIES

By Warwick James Price

**H**EADS of great men all remind us,  
If we go the proper gait,  
We may get up of a morning  
With a head that's just as great.

# THE INTRUDER

By W. Carey Wonderly

HUNTINGDON raised his head, then sat up and listened. Again the noise was repeated, like someone tearing cloth or linen, he thought. It came from the library, the room beyond his study where he had been sitting dreaming before the fire when the sound had first attracted his attention.

He got up and noiselessly crossed the room. The big double doors dividing the two apartments had not been closed tightly, and through the slight opening he could see into the other room.

The library was in half-light. The open grate fire shed a dull, crimson blaze, and the lamp on the table was burning low. Looking, Huntingdon could make out the figure of a woman standing on a chair and swiftly but surely ripping from its frame a painting by Gérôme. At first, he thought it was his wife. Her back was turned toward him and he could see only that she wore an elaborate evening gown. Huntingdon caught his breath and waited. His wife's bridge debts—!

Presently the work was finished and she held the picture off in her hands, her head cocked critically to one side. For a second she stood thus and Huntingdon, watching her, saw with something like a mute prayer of thanksgiving that she was taller, more rounded than his wife, and that her hair was dark. As she stepped down from the chair and moved across the room, he noticed for the first time the two gripsacks, one of which was filled with bric-à-brac and bronzes, that lay over near the oriel window.

Toward these she hastened, and, kneeling down beside them, stooped to rearrange their contents, using her hands with lightning rapidity.

Huntingdon waited to see no more. Leaving his peep-hole, he crept over to his desk and fumbled about in the dark for his pistol. Then he went back to the doors. The woman was still on her knees before the booty.

"There, that will do!" His voice had a note of command in it, but the woman detected that he spoke softly.

She turned quickly; her lips parted and shut, and she smiled.

"I had heard you were in Florida," she nodded, with a slight shrug of her bared shoulders.

For a second Huntingdon was nonplussed. Rapidly he went over the names of his wife's friends, vainly endeavoring to place her. Then the utter absurdity of such a thing struck him, and he laughed. No woman of Edna's acquaintance would be found in her library at one o'clock in the morning ripping her pictures from the walls and loading gripsacks with her bronzes. This woman before him was a thief.

"I must ask you to put those things where you got them," he said, advancing.

She made him no answer, but slowly, gracefully raised herself to her feet. Then Huntingdon took in for the first time her superb beauty.

She was a tall woman—not too tall in the man's sight—and her dark hair and eyes were matchless in their loveliness. She wore a décolleté gown of soft pink like the first faint tints of the

approaching sun and it clung to her perfect figure in a manner that spoke volumes for its maker. Huntingdon, ever observant and critical where women's dress was concerned, noted this, as he did the jewels that she wore round her neck.

For a little they stood thus, measuring each other after the fashion of antagonists, neither speaking a word. Then the woman made a little moue, trailed down the long room, stopped, turned at the far end and advanced toward Huntingdon, her eyes filled with silent combat.

"Your visit is certainly ill-timed," she said quietly.

"So it appears," he coldly ventured. He felt that she was posing for his benefit, trying to make her beauty outweigh the shame of her position. Were he a woman, Huntingdon fancied her attack would have been along other lines—perhaps tears. He was thankful to be spared these, at least.

"What do you propose to do?" she asked after a silence.

"Send for a policeman and give you in charge," he answered grimly.

"I wouldn't," she yawned.

"No? And why?"

"Because I should scream and that would awaken the house—your wife."

"Yes, I rather fancy it would," he said.

"And, to put it mildly, a man of your position would scarcely care to be caught in his library at one o'clock in the morning with a woman like myself."

"With a thief?—why not?" Huntingdon asked.

She seated herself on a low divan and folded her hands across her knees. In this position, with her well-shaped head turned slightly toward him, the man caught the full blast of her loveliness. It seemed to charge the very room.

"It is this," she said, as if stating a fact. "You will ring the burglar-alarm and the policemen will answer your call. What is the trouble? You

point to me and give me in charge—on what charge?"

"You are a housebreaker, a thief," he answered curtly.

"A thief? Who would dare accuse me of theft? Do I look like a thief?" she demanded.

"No, you do not," Huntingdon acknowledged.

"Your wife's visiting-list contains the names of no women who are better appointed than myself. You are connoisseur enough yourself to know that my toilette is perfect in every detail. My jewels——"

"The necklace is paste," interposed the man.

She shrugged. "Fortunately, everyone's eyes are not so keen as yours. My necklace is excellent in its way and answers capitally its purpose. I very much doubt if any policeman will arrest me on the charge of theft while I wear it!"

"I must compliment you on the forethought with which you arrange your—episodes," smiled Huntingdon.

"Experience has been my teacher," said she.

"Generally we find her a hard one," added the man.

"Perhaps. . . . This brings us to the old question again. What are you going to do with me?"

"I have told you—hand you over to an officer."

"Hand me over to— Why, you would not dare!" She laughed very softly, as if afraid of disturbing the house. "You would not dare, Jim Huntingdon!" she cried.

He was annoyed. "You are fortunate in thinking so."

"Why, an officer's face would prove a veritable study in expressions when you made your charge against me," she laughed. "I, a thief!"

"In New York, policemen are chosen neither for their innocence nor their blindness," he reminded her.

"You mean I look a thief? Nonsense! Come, turn in the alarm! We shall see!"

Bowing, Huntingdon crossed the room and disappeared down the wide

hall. He half-suspected that this was but a ruse on her part to get rid of him and that she would vanish directly his back was turned. He knew the window was still open by which she had entered the house.

Once in the hall, he stopped and listened. Everything was still. No frou-frou of silken skirts heralded the flight of the intruder. He hesitated a second, then rang the alarm.

When he came back he found her sitting quietly before the open grate fire. She met his glance and smiled.

"No, I did not run away," she said.

"I have given you the chance to go, remember," he replied shortly.

"Oh, I must see this farce though," she jeered. As she spoke she stole a glance at the great clock in the corner of the room. She had been there just twenty minutes—good! "No, I am not afraid," she said.

"I am glad, because the men will be here in a short while. The station is just across the Park."

She made no answer to this and Huntingdon began to pace back and forth the length of the room. Suddenly he stopped in the oriel window.

"What—whose is that machine out there?" he demanded.

"That is my motor-brougham," she smiled. "I have told my chauffeur to bring it around to the side—the Avenue is so conspicuous, you know; and besides, if anyone happens to see me leaving your house by the window they will think me not—an intruder, but rather——"

"But what?"

"A very good friend of Mr. Jimmy Huntingdon. There is method in my madness—so much you must appreciate. A motor, a side street, an open window, a lady wrapped in dark furs, one o'clock in the morning—oh, Jimmy, Jimmy Huntingdon!"

The man's face flushed. "I had thought you only a thief, now I know you to be——"

"Careful, careful!" she warned, holding up her hand. "I am a thief and you may call me nothing else. Forgive me if I place you in a false position,

but at all cost the coast must be kept clear for my hurried exit."

"And you must go now," he said, coming toward her. "Please go," he begged, when he saw that she made no motion. "Go! I will tell the policemen——"

"Listen! They are at the door now. You had best open it before they arouse the house. Ah-h!"

Huntingdon followed her glance and saw, in the doorway, a great, red-faced son of Erin. His eyes were riveted upon the woman's face and he stood clasping his hands, moving from one foot to the other, watching, watching. Nothing escaped him.

"Ye wanted me, sir?" he said quietly.

The woman had turned her profile to Huntingdon and, glancing in her direction, he saw that she was deathly pale, even worn.

"Want you?" Huntingdon laughed lightly. "Why, no, indeed! The fact is—this lady turned in the alarm by mistake. The electric button is just next, you see, and— It is unfortunate your having to come out on a night like this, but—" Huntingdon pushed a bill into his hand. "Good night. Better luck next time."

Still the man waited. "Ye're sure, sir——?"

"Sure? What?" Huntingdon turned and faced him, frowning.

"I beg pardon, sir——"

The woman rose languidly and trailed toward the study door. "Good night, Jim," she called, with a little yawn. "Do stop this eternal writing and come to bed. Tell Giles to lock—the—front—" Her voice died away and the man heard the soft frou-frou of her skirts as she mounted the stairs.

The officer pulled himself together. "Good night, sir, an' thank ye kindly. Mistakes will happen——"

Huntingdon saw him go out of the house and start across the street toward the Park. Then he came down the hall. The woman was waiting for him. She was very calm now, and smiling.

"That fellow came very near catching the French maid who stole La

Carlini's diamonds—you remember the case," she smiled. "He saw her leave the opera house down the fire-escape—that she did not fall right into his arms was his own stupid mistake. He might fancy he sees a resemblance between the maid and—any pretty woman other than Mrs. Jimmy Huntingdon."

Huntingdon was silent. He placed her cloak around her shoulders and stood waiting while she arranged her furs. Then she was ready to go.

He opened the window and she stepped out on the little marble balcony. He followed. A second later they were standing at the door of her motor-brougham.

"Thank you, and good night," she ventured.

"Good night," he echoed.

She hesitated, her hand on the door.

"What I have done tonight was for my wife, not you," said Huntingdon quietly. "No scandal—you understand."

She nodded. "When I drive in the Park I will watch for her. I should like to see the woman—who is your wife. Home, Dix."

Huntingdon closed his eyes. When he opened them the brougham had gone. He was standing alone on the snow-covered pavement.

With a weary little smile he climbed upon the balcony and let himself into the library. Going over to the chair where she had sat, he stopped.

Far better as it was. She had gone away thinking——?

She was not of his wife's world, he knew, else she would have laughed aloud at even the very idea of any sort of mutual interest between the Huntingdons. Edna Huntingdon with her bridge debts and her escapades, which he tried so tirelessly to hide from the world—such things must not be said about his wife! Edna Huntingdon, with whom he had exchanged but the barest greetings in months!

He turned out the light and entered his study. In there the fire was blazing brightly and shed a warm, cheerful glow about the little room. At his desk he stopped. Bills, Edna's bills; there seemed to be no end to them. He took one up. On the back he fancied he saw a bit of writing. He was half-afraid to read it—one never knew what Edna——

By the glow of the fire he saw:

Go into the drawing-room before you go to bed. We had not time to put things in their proper places, but they are all in the gripsacks—every piece. I let my confederate out of the library window when you were at the front door with the policeman. We have taken nothing. You straighten up the room—it will not take long—and no one will be the wiser. Your wife need never know.

THE INTRUDER.

Huntingdon stood very still. Finally he folded the scrap of paper and placed it in his coat pocket. Then he moved toward the drawing-room.

"Yes," he said softly, "Edna must never know. Not for her sake—oh, no! but for *hers*!"



## THE LIMIT

IT was just a plain lying contest, but the prize was to go to the man who told his lie most briefly and casually.

"I came in on a suburban train this morning," said the prize-winner, "and as I hastily flung up a car window——"



# A MARIAGE CÉLÈBRE

A STORY OF BAYOU DES AMIS

By M. E. M. Davis

"IT is a disgr-r-ace! A shem! A houtr-rage!" cried Monsieur Duplantier, speaking the English with ease, but with a furious rolling of the "r." "The *famille* Duplantier, *mon ami*, has never before abandoned its duty to-ward the state—neither to-ward the *estate*!"

"Vairry good!" chuckled Monsieur Trudeau, in equally fluent English and a like rolling of the "r." "The state and the *es-tate*! *Mais, mon cher* Joseph-Marie, you have produced a *bon mot*; a queep, a quir-rk!"

"For myself," continued Monsieur Duplantier, acknowledging the compliment with a smile, and relapsing into French, "I do not understand my daughter Stéphanie. Behold the *estate*," he took in with an affectionate sweep of his arm the immense cane-fields lying without the park-like lawn which girdled the house, "behold also, the state," a wider, though a vaguer sweep indicated the Body Politic. "These entreat Stéphanie. They command Stéphanie. But in vain! Stéphanie, the sole branch, alas! of the tree Duplantier, makes herself of stone to the one and to the other. Georges, my friend, it is too much!"

He leaned back in his great arm-chair and gazed with reproachful eyes at a white-clad figure outlined against the Cherokee-rose hedge at the foot of the chere-garden.

The two Creole planters, both long past middle-age, but both erect and trim, with lean mobile faces and keen dark eyes, were sitting on the pillared

gallery of the Duplantier plantation house at Bon Secours. It was mid-afternoon; the April breeze, blowing up moist and warm from the distant Gulf, rippled the young cane and set its slender blades to a rustling murmur; a mellow light flooded the fields, and threw into bold relief against a cloudless sky the whitewashed cabins of the negro quarter hard by and the re-roofed sugar-house under the horizon.

"It is exasperating, *parole d'honneur*," said Monsieur Duplantier. "They should be climbing about my knee! And Stéphanie is already of an age, *mon Dieu*!" he threw out his hands in a gesture of disgust. "Never before, since the devil was little, has a Demoiselle Duplantier remained demoiselle to so impossible an age, never! The Demoiselles Duplantier marry at fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years. But, doubtless, mademoiselle my daughter has the desire to become *h'ole maid*." He returned, snorting, to English, as if the French offered no term sufficiently opprobrious.

"But, it is extra-or-r-dinary!" murmured Monsieur Trudeau, politely following his brother-in-law's lead into the less familiar tongue. "*Mais*—why does not Stéphanie marry herself? Joseph-Marie, I h'ask you, *why*?"

"It is that Mademoiselle Stéphanie Duplantier has the windmill of Don Quichotte in her brain," returned Stéphanie's father gloomily. "Mademoiselle demands that the man she shall es-pouse shall have accomplish' some-sing. *Mort de ma vie!* As if Petit Coin Plantation were a *joujou*



for Edouard Vautrain to amuse himself with! Or-r the Bell R-refinery a *girouette* for the wind to turn while Jack Bell makes himself *dan-dee!*"

"Extra-or-r-dinary!" repeated his companion; but absently. He was watching the horseman who, entering the carriage-gate, had cantered up the driveway and dismounted at the entrance to the rose-garden. "Or as if Chavignard, the owner of the Marguerite Plantation, were a *saltimbanque*," concluded the planter.

"I have myself seven daughters and four sons," remarked Monsieur Trudeau complacently. "They have already given me fourteen grandchildren."

"You es-poused a Duplantier, *you*," snapped his listener. "Besides, you have many twins about your *foyer*. But, in truth," he added dejectedly, "my gr-r-andchildren should be climbing about my knee. For the honor of the state—and of the estate."

A second horseman at this moment turned in at the big gate. "R-rega-r-rd!" Monsieur Duplantier pointed a tragic forefinger at the advancing cavalier. "Behold how those plantations enter at my gate. One-fo'th of the sugar-land' of the parish—Godiva, Petit Coin, Bell, Marguerite!—they h'all come at my gate an' h'offer to unite themselves with the *arpent* of Bon Secours. *Mais*, they h'all r-ride away, those sugar-land'. For why? Because, *parbleu*, the Demoiselle Duplantier desires a Don Quichotte like herself for a spouse. Georges, *mon ami*, I tell to thee again, it is too much. I expire of shem and dis-gr-race!"

Meanwhile Mademoiselle Duplantier, who had reached the mature age of twenty-four—was pacing an *allée* of the rose-garden with Edouard Vautrain. She was very fair to look upon, this slim, dark-haired, gray-eyed, red-lipped—and delinquent—Demoiselle Duplantier. Vautrain, who could not remember when he had not loved her, thought she had never seemed so adorable as at this moment, though she was saying—for certainly the fifth time in

half as many years—"Do not ask me, Edouard. It is quite, quite impossible. I l-like you." Vautrain had been listening for the inevitable word, with its suggestion of a stutter, which he found at once so bewitching and so discouraging. He smiled, but squared his shoulders for the equally inevitable sentence which followed. "Pardon, my friend, if I speak plainly; you—you are too *pl-lod-ding*." She dropped, like her father, into English for the word, but returned immediately to the soft lingering syllables of Creole French. "The man whom I shall marry—and love"—the long-lashed eyelids drooped and an exquisite flush dawned into the clear pallor of her cheek—"he must have *done* something worth while."

"But, Stéphanie!" urged the young man desperately, "I am too busy to be doing things. I have Petit Coin to look after——"

"Petit Coin, *mon Dieu*!" interrupted Stéphanie, with fine scorn. "What is a *plantation*!"

"What, indeed!" assented Vautrain grimly, an overwhelming sense of the ceaseless activity, the vast responsibility, the anxieties, the discouragements of the sugar-planter sweeping his brain.

"At least," said Stéphanie after a rather awkward silence, "a planter could perform some——"

"Heroic deed?" Vautrain broke in. "Stop a runaway horse? Drag somebody out of the bayou, eh?"

"Yes," returned Stéphanie, her eyes beginning to blaze at the suggestion of a sneer in his voice, "*you* may consider human life of no account, Mr. Vautrain, but I— Ah, here comes Mr. Bell."

"Very well, Mademoiselle Duplantier," Vautrain gave way to a sudden burst of anger. "This time I accept your decision as final. Find your hero, mademoiselle. For me, I shall continue to plod. I make my compliments—and my adieux!—to Bon Secours."

"As you will, monsieur," returned the Demoiselle Duplantier carelessly. "Ah, Monsieur Bell," she cried gaily, advancing to meet the new-comer.

"You arrive *à propos*. Monsieur Vautrain leaves me—desolated."

Vautrain set his teeth hard as he threw himself into the saddle and galloped away. It might have alleviated his wrath had he known that, some twenty minutes later, his rival—one of his rivals!—would be galloping toward the Bell Refinery with a face as long and a heart as sore as his own.

"Behold how they depart—Petit Coin and Bell R-refinery!" groaned Monsieur Duplantier at watch on the pillared gallery. "*Enfin* my daughter Stéphanie, she is *become* h'ole maid!"

Riding at breakneck speed, with thunderous brow and angry, unseeing eyes, Vautrain came at length in sight of his own plantation house, set, white and stately, in its grove of ancient live-oaks. He drew rein abruptly, and stared at the deserted gallery where he was wont to picture his wife, Stéphanie, waiting for him. *For him!* Something between a sob and an oath escaped his lips; he whirled the startled horse about, digging his spurs savagely in the foaming flanks, and retraced his way—a graceful flying figure—leaving behind him his own cane-fields, then the blue-green reaches of Godiva and Sans Nom plantations. He trotted more soberly through the little village of Des Amis, and entered the wheel-furrowed road which leads along Bayou Des Amis and draws on toward certain Cajan farms.

Ulysse Savarre was at work, hoe in hand, in his cotton-patch at the Habitation Savarre. Palmyre, his wife, short, dark and sharp-tongued, sat at her loom on the porch of the *cabane*; the monotonous thump—thump of the time-worn wooden beam and the click of the shuttle mingled with the *chanson d'Acadie* on her lips. Doucette, the four-year-old *bébé* of the *famille* Savarre, darted back and forth, swift as her mother's shuttle, between cotton patch and porch.

At sight of the approaching horse-man Ulysse dropped his hoe and slouched forward, the child at his heels. "*Bon zou, m'sieu'!*" he called in the soft Cajan patois. He crossed his bare

knotted arms on the gate-post, his bare feet set in a bed of young clover.

Vautrain rode up to the gate.

"Ulysse," he announced abruptly, "the fool of all fools is a man in love."

Ulysse grinned assent.

"And I, as you see me, Ulysse, I am that fool of fools. I am in love."

"*Mais oui, m'sieu'*," returned the Cajan politely, "that jumps at the eyes."

"You have been, also, that fool of fools, eh, Ulysse?" The planter was fencing with himself for time.

"Me? oh, but certainly, *m'sieu'*—*dans le temps*." He jerked an elbow backward in the direction of the unconscious Palmyre.

"Why, of course," said the young man absently. "The truth is, Ulysse, my friend, I desire your help in a—small affair."

"I am ravished, *m'sieu'*," murmured Ulysse.

"You know that hunting-lodge of mine down the bayou, yonder?" he pointed with his riding-whip.

"The maisonnette where *m'sieu'* stays with his friends when the ducks come, in the time of Winter? Yes, *m'sieu'*."

"Well," Vautrain leaned over and began to speak rapidly in a low, confidential tone; the Cajan's eyes bulged out as he listened. "Run to thy *maman*, *'tite chose*." He gave the child a push which sent her whimpering to her mother. "But, *M'sieu'* Edouard," he expostulated, "it is a madness! The maisonnette is a *good* maisonnette——"

Vautrain nodded. "That is my affair," he said.

"And *m'sieu'* has things worth much money in that maisonnette——"

"The house and the things are mine," interrupted the planter impatiently. "The question is, will you or will you not? If you will not, there is Blaise Tremoulet, or 'Polyte Garsin.'"

"*M'sieu'!*" cried Ulysse reproachfully. "They have heads of wood, those Cajans. Me, I am of a steadiness! Yes, *m'sieu'*, it is I, Ulysse Savarre, who will make your *complot* a

success." He reached out a brown hand which Vautrain grasped and shook heartily.

"It is superb! It is of a madness unbelievable," continued Ulysse. "But, what will you! A man in love——"

"I am no longer in love," declared Vautrain. "But I desire to show to Mademoiselle Duplantier——" He dropped his voice again to a half-whisper.

All at once the Cajan burst into a roar of laughter which caused Madame Savarre to glance over her shoulder, and finally to quit her loom and stand hand on hip, with suspicious gaze addressed to her husband's back.

Ulysse slapped his jeans-clad leg with an appreciative hand.

"*Mais!* Eet ees mag-neef-ee-cent, *m'sieu'*," he cried. "I spik the *h'Américaine*," he explained easily. "Eet ees thad Palmyre, my wi-fe, she shell not—what you call?—catch h'on!" He winked slyly at his patron, who blushed a little.

"Tomorrow—Son-day," Ulysse went on, "at nine h'o'clock, I tell to Palmyre thad I h'observe smoke by the Bayou, *là-bas*. I run, *sfi!* to thad *maison de chasse* of *m'sieu'*, where *m'sieu'* shall to sleep tonight. I give h'alarm while I run, *hein?* The bell of Ste. Thérèse maybe she ring, *hein?* Ever'body come. *Alors*, the *grand coup*, *hein?*" He told off these mysteries, one by one, with a forefinger on Vautrain's arm. "Bud! eet ees oud-of-sight, yes!" he slipped a roll of paper money into his bosom. "Ohè, Ma'm'selle Stéph——" Vautrain's scowl arrested the name on his tongue. But his shoulders shook with suppressed laughter as the young man rode off down the Des Amis road.

Palmyre followed the departing horseman with sympathetic eyes. "How he is sad, poor *M'sieu' Edouard*," she murmured. Vautrain's love-affair was parish gossip! "So, she remains of steel, Ma'm'selle Stéphanie! But why," her glance came back to Ulysse at the gate, "why does my man laugh? I know him well. When Ulysse laughs like that he is curling the devil's tail."

She stepped down into the yard.

Palmyre indeed knew her man. In less than ten minutes she had wormed out of him the whole nefarious plot; within another ten minutes Ulysse, having much the air of a dog caught sucking eggs, was mounting the shaggy Cajan pony, *Mercure*.

"Ride, ride like the whirlwind, thou son of darkness," panted Palmyre, red with rage and trembling with emotion. "Assassin! May the blessed St. Peter shut his gate in thy nose if thou overtake not *M'sieu' Edouard*, the viper! and cast in his face his dirty money. May Ste. Ursula, Protector of Young Ladies, strike fire into the bones of *M'sieu' Edouard*. May Ste. Thérèse——"

But Ulysse, his fingers stuffed in his ears, was already clattering townward.

"The *maisonnette* of *m'sieu'*! Ste. Thérèse, her bell! The *grand coup*! Ugh, the monsters! Come to thy *maman*, my little dove, my *'tite chose*! Thy papa is an assassin; he desires to make us die of grief!" She snatched *Doucette* to her bosom. *Doucette* wept without knowing why.

"Assassin? Monster? Dear Madame Savarre!" Monsieur Chavignard had pulled up his team, unnoticed, by the gate, and sat in his light trap looking down with mild curiosity at the disheveled woman. Monsieur Chavignard was the richest among the acknowledged suitors of the Demoiselle Duplantier; he was also in respect of years—according to Monsieur Duplantier—the most eligible, being in truth about that gentleman's age. Mademoiselle's views on the subject remained a matter of speculation in the parish, Marguerite Plantation not yet having—definitely—galloped away from Bon Secours.

"Dear Madame Palmyre, you are agitated," purred Monsieur Chavignard. "Is it that Ulysse——?"

"Ulysse is a cannibal who drinks the tears and the blood of his wife and child," stormed Palmyre. "And as to *M'sieu' Edouard*——"

Monsieur Chavignard pricked up his ears; here was sugar of another grain! He descended from his buggy to pat

with a sympathetic hand the swollen cheek of Madame Savarre, and to bestow upon Doucette the box of *dragées* intended for Mademoiselle Duplantier. He applied, delicately and dexterously, to the flattered Palmyre the same worming process which she herself had so successfully used with her man; and the owner of Marguerite Plantation presently drove away in full possession of Vautrain's *complot*; a *complot* which made him shiver with wonder and filled his brain with schemes of his own.

Hardly had Monsieur Chavignard disappeared when, splashing across Bayou Des Amis from the opposite direction and swinging up to the *cabane* gate, came the shaggy Mercure bearing his master home. Palmyre charged forth and opened her lips; but before she could speak Ulysse, sitting on Mercure, had plunged into a voluble explanation of his return. Out yonder he had, it appeared, met M'sieu' Edouard galloping back to the Habitation Savarre as if the devil were at his back. The poor *garçon* was white as flour, and the eyes of him were all dropped into his head; the poison was dried out of his blood. He had repented himself, M'sieu' Edouard. There was no *complot*. *Pouff!* the *complot* was as air. Mademoiselle Stéphanie was an angel; if she condescended to walk on him with her little feet, he should be ravished. "Also" (continued Ulysse), "M'sieu' Edouard abases himself before the so-beautiful Palmyre—who is the crown of wisdom—for tempting her pig of a spouse to evil; and he implores her to accept for the *couronne de Mai* of the little Doucette that twenty dollars which he gave to that pig, except the half of it" (Ulysse paused and warily studied his wife's face. Relieved by its trusting expression he went on airily), "the half thou wilt keep thyself, Ulysse, my friend, as a token of my esteem. Thus," concluded Ulysse, springing down from Mercure's back and embracing his wife, "is the devil vanquished; and thy Ulysse is returned."

He took the sleeping child from the mother's arms and passed, through the

gathering dusk, into the *cabane*. Madame Savarre followed, alternately elated and remorseful. "The so-beautiful Palmyre!" she murmured, bridling. "Truly that *garçon* has eyes." She turned away from the little mirror on the wall. "But, the tongue in thy head is as long as a whip-snake, Palmyre Savarre! And Chavignard is an old fox." She sighed. Ulysse sighed also; but comfortably, for peace had returned to the Habitation Savarre.

The next morning Monsieur Chavignard drove forth at an early hour; his Sunday morning breakfast at Bon Secours was the habit of a lifetime. He avoided both the Habitation Savarre and the village; making a long detour, perhaps the better to gaze his fill in solitude on those air castles which, like Aladdin's palace, had arisen in a single night. His small eyes glistened, his thin lips moved upon the air as if he rehearsed a lesson.

He paused at the carriage gate of Petit Coin. Vautrain came out, his dogs leaping about him. "Come in, *monsieur*," he called hospitably, though he had small love for Chavignard; was not Chavignard also an *aspirant*!

"Thanks, no, my dear Edouard. I am already late. A light, if you please." Vautrain tendered his match-box. "Bon Secours, as usual?" he suggested.

"Bon Secours, yes. But this time with a difference." Chavignard gathered up the reins. "Pardon my haste. But when one is expected by—" He closed his lips discreetly.

"Ah?" said Vautrain, with an air of studied indifference, "then one may congratulate *monsieur*!" Chavignard's deprecatory shrug of the shoulders conveyed, as he intended, an assent—which would be repudiated afterward if—

"There shall be no if," he swore boldly to himself, spinning along the well-kept road, between sunlit cane-fields.

It was toward the conclusion of the breakfast that Monsieur Chavignard told with dramatic fervor the story of

his interview with Palmyre Savarre. Up to this moment Stéphanie had been singularly distraught, leaning back, pale and listless, in her chair with the look of one who has passed a white night.

Now she sat bolt upright; she listened with flaming cheeks and scornful eyes, her hands gripping the edge of the table.

"It is a fine farce," continued the informer, "which Monsieur Vautrain has arranged for the benefit of Mademoiselle Duplantier!" He addressed his host, but watched Stéphanie out of the tail of his eye. "The young man sleeps last night at his hunting-lodge; this morning at a certain hour he sets fire to the lodge with his own hands, the prodigal! Ulysse, on watch for the smoke, runs, runs, shouting *fire!* A trail of people run shouting at his heel, the bell of Ste. Thérèse is rung . . . the house is already blazing when Monsieur Savarre arrives. Vautrain is desolate at the loss of something within—doubtless mademoiselle's blue ribbon from the tournament! but he keeps back the crowd. . . . Ulysse suddenly dashes into the burning house—at an arranged point where there is no danger; Vautrain dashes in after him . . . and staggers out carrying the man, limp, half-dead, asphyxiated—all pretense!—in his arms. There is loud acclaim, the news travels to mademoiselle. It may well be that mademoiselle will be there. She beholds her hero; she falls to his hand like an orange from a tree that is shaken. Pardon, mademoiselle, the words are not mine, but Vautrain's—Vautrain's," he repeated the name with unction, pleased with his own inventive imagination. "And then? Well, then, this hero of a farce confesses himself shamelessly to the parish, to the world, flings back the heart of mademoiselle, advising her scornfully to lead the apes of Ste. Catharine to hell! . . . Madame Savarre has promised me to permit the comedy to be played out. I——"

Stéphanie had arisen. "Enough," she said hoarsely. "You have ren-

dered me a great service. Monsieur, I thank you. Monster!" The word burst like a missile from her lips and sped, presumably, across the cane-fields toward Petit Coin.

"The apes of Ste. Catharine," chuckled Chavignard within himself. "'Twas a good shot, and now that Vautrain is out of the way—!" With the unerring instinct of jealousy he had divined that this often rejected youngster was his real rival. "It will be a *mariage célèbre*—mine and Stéphanie's!" He grasped the hand of his prospective father-in-law.

"Me, I do not believe one word of it," declared Madame Duplantier, but nobody heeded her; what right to an opinion has a woman who has so nearly failed in her duty to the state and to the estate?

As the carriage came around, the far-off but distinct clangor of a bell smote the Sunday stillness. "An alarm," smiled Chavignard.

Vautrain, on horseback, was nearing Des Amis when the alarm began to sound. "Perhaps my maisonnette is really on fire," he mused whimsically. "It would serve me just right!" And his thoughts went back to Stéphanie. "Old Chavignard!" he ejaculated half-aloud. "*Mon Dieu*, but you have found a fine hero, Stéphanie Duplantier. He has accomplished great things, the wonderful, bald, fat, rich Chavignard! I make you my compliments, mademoiselle. Ho! Ho!" he laughed mirthlessly.

The village was in an uproar; women were scurrying about bareheaded, pale, gathering their children from the streets and huddling them indoors; men stood about in squads, consulting, arguing, explaining—a mixed stream of French and English poured upon the air. Père Durel himself was pulling sturdily at the church-bell rope.

Vautrain paused to put a question, and galloped after Ulysse ahead, whose long legs were urging Mercure down the Bayou road. "Stop, Ulysse," he called. "Stop! Imbecile!" he grasped the pony by the mane. "Somebody's child—" The face which Ulysse

turned upon him curdled the blood in his veins: it was the face of a ghost!

"Oh, M'sieu' Edouard," said the Cajan in a hoarse voice, "it is as Palmyre has said, I have curled the devil's tail, me; and he has tied it around my neck. I am punished, m'sieu', for that *complot*—which came to naught. She is lost, M'sieu' Edouard. The *'tite chose* is lost!" His voice rose to a shriek.

"Ulysse," said Vautrain, with a sternness he was far from feeling, "talk like a man, will you? What has happened?"

"Yes, m'sieu'," returned Ulysse humbly. "The little Doucette, see you, was at the heel of Palmyre and me at the rise of the sun. We have quarreled, Palmyre and me, about that twenty dollars that m'sieu'——"

Vautrain nodded gloomily.

"—and when we have reconciled ourselves, behold, there is no Doucette. We call. We seek. Nothing! Jules Garsin has seen that *bébé* going this way, that way, in the road gathering flowers. She likes flowers, that *bébé*." Ulysse choked down a sob. "Jacques Bron, his Clémentine, has seen her also, but far, oh, far by the *coulée*. We run, we run, Palmyre and me, this way, that way. Again, nothing! Then, m'sieu', I have placed Palmyre on Mercure; I have run beside, we arrive at Des Amis; the bell of Ste. Thérèse, she ring. . . . M'sieu', I think the *bon Dieu* will have care of that *'tite chose*! hein, m'sieu'?"

Vautrain nodded again; he was in truth incapable of speech.

"I go again, now, this way, that way, till I find," concluded Ulysse.

"Ulysse," the younger man was dismounting; "you will return to the village with the horses; you will tell d'Hymel, from me, to take some men and beat through the *coulée*; Tremoulet will go down the Bayou; you and Polyte will search every foot of ground around the Habitation Savarre; Bell and his squad will search the Marguerite cane-fields. I will go—yonder."

"M'sieu'!" cried Ulysse, aghast, "you will enter that *Marais Tremblant*! Then, I go also."

"You will do as I tell you," interrupted Vautrain. "Go. Let the guns be fired if—when the child is found. Tell Palmyre—" but his voice failed him; he vaulted over an intervening ditch and walked rapidly across a small open prairie toward the *cyprès* which lies a couple of miles westward of Des Amis, within whose long and narrow sweep smiles, flower-starred, that treacherous bog known as the Trembling Marsh.

A fraction less than three hours had dragged slowly by; the women and children of the village and the outlying neighborhoods, and the men who were too old or too infirm to join in the search, were waiting in anxious suspense about the grandstand in the tournament grounds. Père Durel prayed in the silent church for the lost child, and for the mother, who lay prone and face downward in the aisle.

Stéphanie Duplantier sat in the family coach alone, for Monsieur and Madame Duplantier had retired to the house of a kinsman. Her pale face flushed, now with womanly anguish for the lost child, now with anger against Vautrain, whose farce, for all she knew, had been played out.

These were the emotions, at least, which Monsieur Chavignard read into her heart. He leaned against the wheel of his buggy at a little distance, watching her furtively. He felt sorry for the Savarres, poor devils, but—he could hardly keep a self-satisfied smirk out of his face. "It will be a *mariage célèbre*"; the words rang sonorously in his brain. He saw himself emerging from the church of Ste. Thérèse yonder, with Madame Chavignard on his arm—Madame Chavignard, late that Demoiselle Duplantier who had rejected half the marriageable men in the parish! The first Duplantier wedding, if you please, since twenty-five years! A *mariage célèbre* indeed!

A faint halloo came echoing up the Bayou road; a louder shout heralded the approach of a lad who raced in, waving his arms. "He's got her. Mr. Vautrain's found her! He's com-



in'. 'Cross the prairie. From the Shakin' Swamp!'"

The rush of the crowd bore him back along the Bayou road; there was a suppressed roar which dared not break out lest Palmyre, back there in the church, should hope too much. Stéphanie, at the first halloo, had left the carriage to stand with alert, uplifted head—like a listening deer. When the others ran out she ran with them. Chavignard followed, somewhat heavy of foot, but rapid enough to find himself in a moment elbow to elbow with the future Madame Chavignard. He looked at her sideways, and drew a long, exultant breath.

She paused with the crowd, on the edge of the dry gully which bounded the prairie. Chavignard marked the indignant leap of her heart—it stirred the lace of her bodice—as Vautrain came into view, tall and slender against a background of cypress trees, moss-hung. He advanced slowly, carrying the child on his left arm; the small head, with its elf-locks, rested against his shoulder; the scrawny arms clasped his neck.

The little figure in its sodden garments hung a dead weight against his breast. "But God be praised"—the whisper ran like lightning through the crowd—the little maid "was not dead, but sleeping." Vautrain's eyes brooded tenderly over her. As he drew nearer, it became apparent that he limped painfully; his right arm dangled, a helpless thing, at his side; blood oozed from his forehead and trickled down his face. His clothes were wet with ooze and slime.

At last the breathless people opened lips to shout, but again stood silent. For Mademoiselle Duplantier, slim, elegant, beautiful, had darted forward. Her leap across the gully, it was afterward said, was like the airy flight of a dove! Her right arm went about Vautrain's neck, enfolding him and the child in a close embrace; with her free hand she lifted the broken wrist to her lips; the swamp-flowers picked by the *'tite chose* dropped from the baby fist upon her bowed head.

Vautrain stared down at her like one in a dream, while the long-arrested shout broke upon the air. A moment later the bell of Ste. Thérèse clanged again—joyously; a volley of pistol shots awoke the echoes; and Ulysse, from nobody knew where—least of all Ulysse himself!—and Palmyre from the church, came running, weeping aloud for joy, and calling down blessings on the Holy Virgin, St. Anthony of Padua and M'sieu' Edouard in one and the same breath.

Mercure was presently loping homeward, Palmyre on his back, with Doucette, pale but unhurt, in the hollow of her arm. Ulysse ran alongside, the rope bridle in his hand. The two older faces were wan with emotion.

"How Ma'm'selle Stéphanie is beautiful, *hein*, Ulysse?" murmured Palmyre at length, wistfully.

"But yes!" said Ulysse. "She is beautiful as an angel, Ma'm'selle Stéphanie. But thou, Palmyre, my cherished, thou, with the *'tite chose* on thy arm, thou art like the Mother of the Little Jesus. Yes." He stooped as he ran and kissed the hem of her cotton skirt.

The same afternoon Vautrain walked with Stéphanie in the rose-garden of Bon Secours; from the trellises overarching the *allée* Des Amis roses let fall in their path from moment to moment sweet-scented waxen-white petals; the young faces turned each to the other were illumined by the after-glow of sunset; a mocking-bird sang in the heart of a dagger-tree near-by.

"How long have you loved me, Stéphanie?" demanded Vautrain, almost shyly, for the wonder of it all was fresh upon him.

"Always," returned Stéphanie promptly. "Only, I did not know it."

"When, when did you—find out?" he ventured.

She cast down her eyes. "This morning," she said demurely, "when Monsieur Chavignard was telling me about your great plan—to burn the maisonnette and rescue Ulysse Savarre;

then having, by your heroism, won the poor little heart of the Demoiselle Duplantier, to cast it back into her teeth and request her, politely, to lead the apes of Ste. Catharine to hell."

Vautrain stood literally stiff with horror; even Chavignard's embroidering did not loosen his tongue. "Stéphanie!" he groaned at length, "you—you know of that vile scheme! Chavig—! Oh, but I really never meant— You will never let me speak to you again!" he ended wildly.

"Listen, Edouard!" she held up a small, imperative hand, "when that cobra of a Chavignard was telling me this morning at breakfast about that scheme I said to myself, 'Stéphanie Duplantier, a man who loves a girl with a madness divine enough to conceive a plot like that, and burns his maisonnette to show his scorn of her—*ma foi*, such a man is worth living for.'"

"If I am awake—" murmured Vautrain.

"But when I saw you coming out

of that horrible *Marais Tremblant*, broken and spent with your struggle there, with your eyes soft on that little child—I said to Stéphanie Duplantier, 'Such a man is worth dying for!'"

It may well be imagined that one of those silences called eloquent followed this speech.

"One thing, Monsieur Edouard Vautrain," Stéphanie presently remarked, "henceforward you will do nothing of so cruel a rashness. You will stay at Petit Coin with your—wife—and——"

"Pl-lod?" smiled Vautrain. But his voice was almost reverential.

On the pillared gallery Monsieur Duplantier was sitting with Monsieur Trudeau. They were enveloped in an aura of beatitude and tobacco smoke.

"A *mariage célèbre*, eh, Joseph-Marie?" remarked Trudeau.

"But yes," assented Duplantier. "Georges, my friend, the *famille* Duplantier is rehabilitated. At last I am content. Stéphanie fulfils her duty to the state—and to the *estate*!"



## A DAUGHTER OF SORROW

By John Vance Cheney

SO strangely fair, and hers so many woes!  
Wonder not at all;  
It is Love's wont to hang her rarest rose  
On the ruined wall.



## MERCENARY

SALLIE—Are you looking for a young man with a future?  
ALICE—No, for an old man without one.

# "NOBLESSE OBLIGE"\*

A ROMANCE IN VERSE

By William C. de Mille and John Erskine

## CHARACTERS

GEORGE (*Fifteenth Duc de Marney*).

RAOUL (*His brother, Captain under Charles of Navarre*).

ROGER (*Servant of RAOUL*).

ANNE (*Duchesse de Marney*).

SCENE—*One of the Duke's hunting-lodges in the Forest of Marney. Time, May, 1358. The curtain rises on the interior of the hunting-lodge. At the back a massive door is open, showing the moonlit forest. To the left a door leads to the cellar, and there is a small window. Though the furniture is simple, the mark of luxury shows in the table, the two chairs and the couch. On the table are two unlighted candles; on the hearth the fire burns low. After a moment RAOUL is heard outside singing.*

RAOUL

Oh, John the Good is a worthy lord,  
The King of the cups is he;  
So drain a flagon and gird on sword  
And off to the wars with me!

(*He enters, followed by ROGER. RAOUL is about thirty years old; he has the manner of a gentleman, but shows that he is dissipated. At present he has been drinking, yet his speech is clear. ROGER is a man of fifty, hale and hearty.*)

ROGER

We are here at last, Monsieur le Capitaine.

RAOUL

O Roger, wiser than the philosophers!  
Thy logic hath no answer—we are here.

ROGER

The others come not yet.

(*He lights the candles.*)

\* All acting rights reserved.

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RAOUL

No. My dear brother,  
The Fifteenth Duc de Marney, follows  
our lady

Danger as the dark night follows day;  
Where she is, he is not. Well, we can  
wait.

There is no mistake, Roger? This is  
the place?

ROGER

This is the place they meant.

RAOUL

Roger—*pardieu!*  
This story of yours—is it a fairy-tale  
From the daft books you fed your  
baby-soul

Too full on—and last night you  
dreamt it over,  
Fed too full again—on mine host's  
larder?

ROGER

Nay, do not jest, monsieur! The  
heavy war  
Has ground the peasants to the dust;  
revolt  
Has long been threatening, and this  
sudden tax  
The Duc de Marney lays—now they  
will fight.

RAOUL

Poor dogs, with a hard master! Are  
you sure,  
Roger, it is tonight they strike?

ROGER

Monsieur,

I could not be mistaken. Against the door  
I crouched; I heard their leader, old Callet,  
Tell how your brother, fearing some revolt,  
Had stored this hunting-lodge, where he would hide.  
If he escape them from his burnt chateau,  
Then they will find him here.

RAOUL

Well, fool enough  
Am I to believe your rumor-laden ears.  
But Roger, may pain love you if we chase  
That tender bird, wild goose!

ROGER

Nay, it is true;  
They rise tonight.  
(RAOUL goes to the open door.)

RAOUL

Ah, what a beautiful night  
For an uprising!

ROGER

What are your plans, monsieur?

RAOUL

Plans, Roger? O intriguer! Why should I  
Have plans?

ROGER

How else to save your life, monsieur,  
Your brother's or his wife's?

RAOUL

Tut, tut, tut, Roger!  
Babbling of saving lives?

ROGER

What will you do?  
No three men can hold back this devil-pest  
Blood-crazy, puffed with sacking the chateau!

RAOUL

For this once thou art wrong, philosopher!  
Not three men will be here, but only two—  
Myself and thyself—and the Duc de Marney.

ROGER

Monsieur! You must do something!

RAOUL

Nay—what more?  
You say my brother's peasants—to my grief—

Will murder him; so I, true-brotherly,  
Am come to break the news.

ROGER

Ah, it is good,  
Monsieur, that you forgive him at the last!

RAOUL

Forgive! Forgive my brother? Faith,  
Roger—nay,  
He did me wrong that one does not forgive.

ROGER

Why warn him then at all?

RAOUL

Because my brother  
Was born above his nature; his thin veins  
Run gentle blood—and of his blood am I.

Shall I stand idle while a peasant-swarm

Suck even his pulses dry? "*Noblesse oblige*,"

Roger; my blood binds me to warn the duke,

To fight for him, to die—but not forgive.

ROGER

Ah, sir, remember—he is your brother.

RAOUL

Brother!  
To lay his gambling-snares and push me in—

To seize my patrimony for my debts—  
Brotherly offices! And then for love—  
Brotherly love—to marry my betrothed!

Had he been less than brother, he and I  
Had missed this happy evening.

ROGER

But, monsieur,  
You have forgotten *her*?

RAOUL

No—not forgotten;  
She broke her troth to wed—the Duc de Marney,  
A man she did not love; she wished for power—

(*He laughs.*)

Tonight will show her what that power is worth.

(*His manner changes.*)

Roger, my friend, thou hast made me all but serious!

Something to eat and drink, man! and forget  
Such toys as life and death.

ROGER

Ah, monsieur knows—  
The Norman won our last coin—we have brought  
Nothing.

RAOUL

Faith—Roger, thou hast my deepest sympathy.

ROGER

Monsieur?

RAOUL

Thou hast a ruined, gambling master—

No money left nor hope—only my life,  
And that will go tonight! O Pearl of Philosophers,

My Prince of Servants—

*(His voice changes—his hand falls on ROGER's shoulder.)*

My most faithful friend—  
Go—seek a better master—use him worse!

ROGER

Monsieur forgets he promised to discharge me  
Never again.

RAOUL

Faith, so I did! Well, then,  
Thou art forgiven and thy rank restored.

ROGER

Thank you, monsieur!

RAOUL

And now—something to eat!  
My brother never kept a hungry house.  
Ah, some wisdom tells me there is wine  
Behind that door.

*(He points to the door of the cellar and ROGER opens it.)*

ROGER

The cellar!  
*(He takes a candle and goes out through the door.)*

RAOUL

Was I right?  
Hast thou found wine?  
*(ROGER's voice is heard from the cellar.)*

ROGER

But here is food, monsieur—  
Shall I bring it up?

RAOUL

Aye! What a thing is food  
To take 'twixt drinking times!

ROGER

And here is wine,  
Monsieur.

RAOUL

O Heart of Happiness, bring it forth!  
Two hours of arid life since I have drunk!

*(ROGER enters with a jug of wine, some bread and a fowl. He takes cups from the mantel and puts them upon the table.)*

Come thou, Bacchus—fall to!

*(RAOUL sits at the table; ROGER remains standing.)*

Man, art not hungry?

ROGER

Aye, monsieur.

RAOUL

Then sit and eat.

ROGER

Monsieur!

It is not fitting.

RAOUL

*Fitting, i' faith—  
(He assumes a rough manner.)*

Eat, sirrah,

I command!

ROGER

Thank you, monsieur

*(RAOUL fills a cup.)*

RAOUL

And drink this, too,  
Or I will have you punished.

ROGER

Thanks, monsieur.

RAOUL

For all the unfaithful dames that ever made  
Miserable this life of man, the comfort's here!

*(He puts his hand on the wine jug.)*

ROGER

Aye, monsieur.

RAOUL

Oh, come, man, talk, be merry!  
Thy wit hath shallow fountains. Here, a toast—

*(He rises, cup in hand.)*

To her who ruined what I *thought* was life,  
And taught me what life is.

ROGER  
You spoke of her  
Otherwise once, monsieur!  
RAOUL  
Aye, when I believed  
In faithful women, but it is a lie,  
Roger—set that in thy philosophy;  
No faith in the whole world.  
(*He starts to drink.*)  
ROGER  
No faith in me,  
Monsieur?  
(*RAOUL lowers his cup.*)  
RAOUL  
Now, Roger, here you come to mar  
My oratory! Nay, you are gold; you  
prove  
The iron rule. Pardieu! Do you re-  
member  
The song she said fate made for her  
and me?  
ROGER  
Nay.  
RAOUL  
It went thus:  
Thou bringest love as the sun brings day,  
True, dear heart, shall we ever be;  
Life were nought, wert thou away;  
Death were sweet, could I die for thee.  
(*He laughs.*)  
O Roger, beautiful irony!  
Life were nought, wert thou away—  
(*ROGER goes quickly to the door.*)  
ROGER  
Monsieur!  
Hush! I hear voices.  
(*RAOUL drinks.*)  
RAOUL  
Aye—that is the way  
With voices.  
ROGER  
It is they!  
RAOUL  
What, de Marney?  
His fleeing duchess?  
ROGER  
Aye—they come in here.  
RAOUL  
Good! We have noble company at  
the feast.  
(*He remains seated and drinks.*  
GEORGE enters with his sword drawn,  
supporting ANNE; they both look fatigued.  
When GEORGE sees the two other men

*he retreats to the couch, holding his sword  
ready for defense.)*  
GEORGE  
Who are you?  
(*RAOUL rises, keeping his face in the  
shadow.*)  
RAOUL  
A gentleman and his servant  
Who trespass on your grace's hospi-  
tality.  
(*At the sound of RAOUL's voice ANNE  
sinks on the couch, where she remains  
during the next scene, hearing all but  
showing no interest; she is careless of  
her fate.*)  
GEORGE  
Ah, you know me?  
RAOUL  
Yes, Monsieur le Duc.  
Roger, some wine for Madame la  
Duchesse;  
She is fatigued.  
(*ROGER obeys.*)  
GEORGE  
Monsieur, may I command  
Your sword to save this lady?  
RAOUL  
My sword, monsieur?  
You are in trouble?  
GEORGE  
Can it be you know not  
Our plight, monsieur?  
RAOUL  
Nay, nothing serious, I hope!  
GEORGE  
The peasants have risen—are burning  
the chateau;  
My servants all deserted me—we  
escaped  
With our lives, but barely that.  
RAOUL  
How fortunate!  
GEORGE  
Now, monsieur, may I ask again, who  
are you?  
RAOUL  
I am Captain under His Fearless  
Majesty Charles, King of Navarre.  
My name—Raoul de Marney.  
(*He turns to GEORGE, who steps back  
and raises his sword.*)  
GEORGE  
Raoul?  
RAOUL  
Why, brother, after all these years,



You do not seem much overjoyed to meet me.

GEORGE

It is *you* who have been breeding discontent

Among my people!

RAOUL

I would not breed my dogs there!

Ah—my poor manners! How fares my dear sister?

(*He would go to her, but GEORGE raises his sword.*)

GEORGE

Keep back!

RAOUL

Why, brother, one who knew you not Might say you feared me! Here you need no sword.

GEORGE

Eight years ago for some imagined wrong

You swore revenge, and what you are I know—

Soldier of fortune, drunkard, gambler—smirch

On our bright name de Marney. I trust you not.

RAOUL

Kind phrases, brother! Soldier of fortune—yes,

When fortune was no more; drinker of wine,

Since the cup of love was taken; card-player,

Since I was cheated in this game of life; Smirch on the name de Marney—since

*you bore it!*

But that was long ago.

(*He lays his sword and dagger on the table.*)

Put up your sword,

Monsieur le Duc; one does not fight one's brother.

As for these fancied wrongs—one does not trust

Too far one's fancy. Once I trusted mine—

Fancied myself of love and wealth and rank

Robbed by my brother—fancied for eight years

He let me shift like an adventurer—fancied

Hunger and humiliation were his gifts.

I had been taught to gamble, taught to fight,

Taught nothing else; by nothing else I lived.

Oh, merry times we two have had, my Fancy!

We grew together, as those imagined years

Dragged like real time; now it is hard to part,

We are so much to each other, Fancy and I.

(*GEORGE sheathes his sword.*)

GEORGE

Well—be it so—no time for family quarrels

Now; we are all in danger.

(*He turns to ROGER.*)

Here—make your way

To the chateau and find out if our flight

Is yet discovered.

(*As ROGER starts to obey, RAOUL stops him with a sign.*)

RAOUL

Roger, Monsieur le Duc

Doubtless mistakes you for a servant of his.

GEORGE

Over all living creatures on my lands, Monsieur, I have the right of life and death.

RAOUL

Ah—this same death, which you control so well,

Now through the Forest of Marney seeks its master.

GEORGE

What do you mean?

RAOUL

That I have come, dear brother, To tell you—good for evil—your hiding-place

Is known; at midnight come the Jacquerie,

From burning your chateau, to burn your lodge.

GEORGE

Why do *you* tell me this?

RAOUL

"*Noblesse oblige!*"

Brother, I would not save you if I could;

I give myself the pleasure to die with you.

(GEORGE hurries to the door.)

GEORGE

O fool, you have been wasting precious time!

How far we might have been by now!

RAOUL

Monsieur,

There is no path unguarded; twenty eyes

Saw you come in; now the whole country knows

Your grace's presence.

(GEORGE leans against the door almost fainting.)

We have an hour, perhaps,

Till they are gathered for their pleasant task

Of killing their kind master, the Fifteenth Duc de Marney.

(He drinks.)

GEORGE

Dieu! Is there no chance of escape?

RAOUL

Yes, there is one; at midnight they will meet

Northward a quarter-league—then in a body

Dash on the lodge; that moment, toward the south

The path will be unguarded—

GEORGE

But at once

Our flight is known, and they will overtake us

Ere we have gone a league!

RAOUL

Not Archimedes

Could reason straighter! Therefore they must *not*

Know of our flight.

GEORGE

But how can we prevent it?

RAOUL

The door bolts on the inside and is strong.

If but one man remain, bolt himself in, Kill an occasional peasant; in their rage

They will set fire to the lodge; and when the flames

Are guard enough against them, he inside

Falls on his sword; his body is burnt; and they,

Believing that all have perished, will not search

For two men guiding a lady to the camp Of Charles of Navarre, four leagues to the south.

What think you of my plan, brother?

GEORGE

It has

One fatal weakness.

RAOUL

Ah—and that?

GEORGE

Can one

Be sure your servant really will remain To die for us?

ROGER

Monsieur le Duc, I will—

RAOUL

Roger, Monsieur le Duc addresses me.

ROGER

Pardon, monsieur!

RAOUL

You miss my meaning, brother; To the place of honor a servant has no right;

That is for you or me.

GEORGE

And how will you

Decide that?

RAOUL

Faith, by our old friends, the dice! Three throws—the winner shall conduct madame

To safety. You understand?

GEORGE

Aye—but too well!

What chance have I against a gambler?

RAOUL

One!

One chance to save your life—if fate is just,

A bad chance. Come—you taught me once to play

For perilous stakes; the stake is now your life

Or mine.

(He takes the dice and box from his pocket and stands behind the table.)

GEORGE

Raoul, swear that if I should win You will do as you have said.

RAOUL

What shall I swear by?

A drunkard's word, a gambler's I have given;

That must suffice.

GEORGE  
So be it; give me the cup.  
(*He throws. Both look at the dice; then RAOUL picks them up.*)

RAOUL  
A pretty throw, monsieur!  
(*He throws.*)

GEORGE  
Ah, I have won!  
RAOUL  
Truly—you have but one; there are two more.  
(*GEORGE throws again.*)  
Ah, this time fate has been unkind to you!  
That is not hard to better.  
(*He throws.*)

As I thought;  
Now we are even, brother—  
(*GEORGE takes the dice again.*)

Monsieur le Duc!  
Throw carefully! On one turn of your wrist  
The life you love so well and all the riches  
That make life dear—

(*GEORGE throws for the third time.*)  
Ah—good! That throw is hard  
To beat, dear brother, but it can be done.

(*He puts the dice in the box and looks at GEORGE.*)  
I see you do not play with that same coolness  
You once did; you are flushed; take my advice  
And give up gambling—your nerves will not stand it.

GEORGE  
Throw, man, for God's sake!

RAOUL  
True, I had forgot.  
Well, then, here goes the wheel of fortune.

(*He throws. GEORGE looks at the dice and sinks into a chair. There is a pause.*)

H'm!  
I was wrong—there is a just God. Well, brother,  
We still have left an hour before they come—  
Your last; I will let you say how we shall spend it.

GEORGE  
Raoul! Will you leave me here to die alone?

RAOUL  
Faith, I would gladly stay, but one of us must see Madame to safety.  
(*GEORGE rises.*)

GEORGE  
My God, man—think!  
This death is terrible!  
RAOUL  
Better a friendless death  
Than a friendless life.

GEORGE  
Raoul, I am your brother;  
You are my murderer if you let me die!

RAOUL  
And if you let me die? What then?  
GEORGE

Raoul!  
I am the Duc de Marney—you are a gambler;  
There is none to care for you—I have a wife—  
Who will guard her if I am killed?  
(*ANNE rises.*)

ANNE  
Monsieur  
Le Duc, shield not your cowardice with my name!

RAOUL  
Madame is right; brother, you are a coward.

GEORGE  
Well—if I am, what have I now but life?  
If I die bravely, what good is it to me? I want life—only life! Take half my fortune,  
Raoul—it is yours by right—I admit it now—  
Only make me not die!  
(*He goes on his knees and takes RAOUL'S hand.*)

Take all I have,  
But leave me my life, only my life!  
(*ANNE speaks half to herself.*)

ANNE  
Oh, coward!  
(*She turns away.*)

RAOUL  
Roger, wait outside. I would not have My servant see a gentleman on his knees

Before a drunkard, a gambler, a soldier  
of fortune,  
A smirch on a good name.  
(ROGER goes out.)

GEORGE

I was wrong, Raoul!

I was wrong!

RAOUL

Nay, you were right; I am all those  
things;  
But you, first of our race, you are a  
coward.

Pray, take your hands from mine; I  
do not wish  
To touch you.

(GEORGE takes away his hands and  
sits in a chair. RAOUL stands and looks  
at him; then he picks up a lighted candle  
and holds it across the table in GEORGE'S  
face.)

His Grace, the Fifteenth Duc de  
Marney!

Listen, monsieur; you could not buy  
my life

With money, but—these peasants shall  
not know

That one de Marney is afraid to die.

If you will grant me this half-hour alone  
With Madame la Duchesse, I will take  
your place

And die for you.

ANNE

Monsieur! You would not—

RAOUL

You!

Monsieur le Duc, decide! Those are  
my terms.

(GEORGE rises and goes to ANNE.)

GEORGE

Madame, it is our one chance! It were  
wrong

Not to accept.

ANNE

Monsieur le Duc! You know  
What you propose to your own wife?

GEORGE

Madame,

It is our only hope; if I am killed  
You will be left with him.

ANNE

Then let us both  
Stay here and die! Since how long is  
your honor

Nothing to you, Monsieur le Duc?

GEORGE

My honor?

Without my life? Nay, Anne, you will  
do this

To save my life?

(ANNE speaks half to herself.)

ANNE

The dastard!

(She sinks on a chair and hides her  
face in her hands.)

GEORGE

She consents.

(He starts toward the door.)

I will wait outside to warn you when  
they come.

(RAOUL does not notice him. He goes  
out and closes the door.)

RAOUL

Well, sister, that great soul has his own  
code

Of morals. Look not so—you need not  
fear!

Your honor is far safer in my hands  
Than in your husband's. You have

sold yourself

To him; I will not cheat him of his  
bargain.

ANNE

What is your purpose?

RAOUL

To show you, madame,

The thing your husband is. Eight  
years ago

You broke your troth with me—ruined  
my life;

Now I have paid that debt. In half an  
hour

I shall be free, but you—what life is  
yours?

Kind heaven! Wife of the Fifteenth  
Duc de Marney!

Yet you are suited—a woman without  
faith

Wed to a coward.

ANNE

It is brave, no doubt,

Not cowardly, to insult defenseless  
women!

RAOUL

Madame! Defenseless? Your hus-  
band, you forget,

Is within call.

ANNE

Oh, you are not Raoul  
De Marney, not the gentleman I loved!

RAOUL  
No—I am Raoul de Marney, the man  
you made  
A gambler and a drunkard.

ANNE  
I made you this?  
Had you no will of your own? You  
threw your soul  
Away—and do you blame a woman for  
it?  
What right has any man to *allow* his life  
To take harm from a woman! God  
gave it him  
To use wisely and well; how dare he let  
A woman throw God's high gift in the  
dust!  
No, Raoul, I was false to you—God  
knows  
I have suffered for it; but for what you  
are  
'Tis you alone must answer.

RAOUL  
Oh, if men were perfect,  
No lives were wrecked; since perfect  
they are not,  
To make them so God gave us woman's  
love.  
When *she* is false, some men have  
strength to mold,  
Out of the shattered clay of their old  
lives,  
A deeper chalice for a nobler wine;  
I have no such strength. Your hus-  
band fears to die;  
I am afraid to live. Only one thing  
Is dear to me—honor; I wish to die  
Before I lose that.

ANNE  
Raoul, we both did wrong;  
I have deeply wronged you—you have  
wronged yourself.  
Will you forgive?

RAOUL  
No, Madame la Duchesse.  
ANNE  
I have punishment enough—you do  
not know  
What my life is!

RAOUL  
But you chose it, madame.  
ANNE  
Raoul, I was young—blinded by wealth  
and rank,  
Ill-guided by my parents; I was weak

To yield, I know—but, Raoul, I loved  
you then—  
I have never ceased to love you. Do  
you still  
Love me, Raoul?

RAOUL  
No, Madame la Duchesse.  
ANNE  
Tonight we part forever; for the sake  
Of our old love, die not with hate of me,  
With hate of me in your heart! Will  
you not forgive?

RAOUL  
No, Madame la Duchesse.  
(ROGER *throws open the door.*)

ROGER  
It is time, monsieur;  
They assemble now, and the south  
road is free.  
(*In the distance is heard the murmur of  
a mob.* GEORGE *enters.*)

GEORGE  
Come, Anne, we must hasten.  
(ANNE, *weeping silently, goes to the door  
and waits.* RAOUL *goes over to the  
hearth.* GEORGE *goes toward him.*)

I have done you wrong,  
Raoul; you are a brave man.  
RAOUL

When your time  
To die comes, for the honor of our house  
God grant you die alone!  
(GEORGE *goes toward ANNE.*)

Roger, my friend,  
Conduct monsieur and madame to the  
camp;  
You know the way.

ROGER  
O Monsieur Raoul,  
I am old and of no service—let me take  
Your place!

RAOUL  
Roger, do you forget yourself?  
You have my orders.  
(*He goes to ROGER and puts his hand  
on his shoulders.*)

Why, old friend—old friend—I am  
Not worth one of thy tears. Mon-  
sieur

Le Duc, promise me this: when you are  
safe,

Give to my servant here a bag of gold!  
(GEORGE *nods.*)

Farewell, Roger. Now do not squan-  
der it all;

Remember, I warned thee always  
against gambling.

(ROGER quickly kneels and kisses his  
hand—then goes out, followed by GEORGE  
and ANNE. The murmur of the mob is  
heard nearer. RAOUL goes to the door,  
closes and bars it. He unsheathes his  
sword and lays it on the table; then he  
looks out of the window.)

Ten minutes more!

(He turns and sees the glove ANNE has  
dropped near the door; he picks it up,  
brings it to the firelight, and gazes at it  
thoughtfully; then he very deliberately  
throws it into the fire. He goes to the  
table, drinks from the jug, sits down, and  
begins to throw the dice. The murmur  
of the mob is nearer. A red glow shines  
through the window.)

CURTAIN



## LES FILEUSES

Par Tristan Klingsor

J'AI ME le bourdon des rouets frêles,  
Le soir, auprès des tapisseries  
Quand les doigts les emmêlent entre elles  
Oiselles et roses de féeries.

J'aime ouïr les contes des fileuses  
Radotant aux grésils des chandelles  
Les histoires d'amour fabuleuses  
De dames et de pages fidèles.

Au ronflement des rouets fragiles  
Les bouches aux quenottes cassées  
Marmonnent à l'heure des vigiles,  
Leurs vieillottes chansons cadencées.

C'est l'aventure de Loys le page  
Qui mourut d'amour fol pour sa belle  
Recevant une fleur en message,  
Ou celle de Jehan et d'Isabelle.

Les lèvres ont des contes sans nombre;  
L'heure coule de songes frôlée,  
Et si la porte s'ouvre dans l'ombre  
Les mains s'arrêtent ensorcelées,

Car chacune des frêles fileuses  
Croit entendre venir, comme au conte,  
Avec la fleur d'amour fabuleuse  
Aux doigts, quelque page au quelque conte

Qui s'agenouillera devant elle  
Pour déposer sur ses mains flétries  
Le baiser, toujours jeune et fidèle.  
De l'amoureux tardif des féeries.



# THE TAINT O' THE LAG

By William Hamilton Osborne

## I

### THE FUGITIVE

STEPHEN MITCHELTREE waited with the patience that was characteristic of the man. Waiting, he paced slowly, and with miraculous regularity, first eight feet to the north, then six feet to the east, then eight feet to the south, six feet to the west. Then he began all over again. The distances never varied. His method sometimes varied, for at times he walked up and down, up and down, eight feet, or east and west, over and over again, six feet—but constantly he kept within the rectangle that seemed to bind him, invisible though it were. And yet, his broad veranda was many times eight feet in length; at least three times six feet in width.

"It ought to be about time," he complained gently, to himself. He stopped in front of the open door, and roared genially into the hall.

"Oh, girliel! Oh, Janet," he cried. "Say, aren't you ready yet?"

From somewhere in the rooms above there floated down to Stephen Mitcheltree a voice that was the sweetest music in the world to him.

"Coming," said the voice; "coming."

Mitcheltree laughed. "I'll bet her mouth is full o' hairpins, by the way she talks," he said.

He ceased his restless pacing for an instant, and stood, looking the moon, with stolid glance, squarely in the face. He was a broad, heavy, grizzled man, was Stephen Mitcheltree. Upon his face were deep lines—the marks that life had left upon him. The stoop of

his heavy shoulders and the bow of his big arms showed that labor had placed its stamp upon him. For the rest, he bore himself as any prosperous, self-made man of the West might bear himself, and Stephen Mitcheltree was self-made, and he was prosperous enough, as all the town knew. He was the cattle king of Donaldson. Behind the town his broad ranges stretched across the hills and disappeared upon the other side.

Suddenly he roused himself. "I . . . 'most' forgot, pal," he whispered contritely, as though speaking to some other living presence. "I got to thinking about Janet and . . ."

He stepped into the house and returned with a small lantern. He examined it carefully, to see that it was well supplied with oil. Then he lit it, tied it deftly to the end of a rope in the lawn below, and hoisted it hastily to the top of a tall flag-staff that stood to the north of the big house. Night after night he had done this thing with his own hands. The town didn't know why.

"Mitcheltree's light," they called it. Small as it was it could be seen for miles around. Mitcheltree's new yearlings, homing it across the hills, blinked their eyes and wondered what new star that was that the god of the cattle had set for them to wink at and wonder about.

As Mitcheltree drew the rope taut and made it fast, he felt a light touch upon his arm.

"I'm ready." It was Janet, his little girl Janet. He held her at arm's length and looked upon her.

"Gee, but you're swell tonight, girlie," he said. He was right. Janet Mitcheltree was eighteen or nineteen—well, maybe twenty. Janet didn't tell. But the town didn't care about her age. It did care about looks. And the town took off its hat for Janet Mitcheltree. She was a wonderful bit of color against the somber landscape; a full-lipped, red-lipped girl, with the free air in her face; a dark, lustrous beauty; with all the freshness of youth and all the fulness of woman. And yet, in her dark eyes, there was something more than beauty; there was some strange expression that even Janet could not account for. Trouble looked from them; fear dwelt within them. Janet was without trouble; she was without fear. But men forgot her beauty when they saw that strange expression. It smote their heart-strings. Her beauty claimed what all beauty claims from men; but this thing that looked out upon them from her eyes was an appeal—for protection, for care, for safety. Even in the moonlight, Stephen Mitcheltree, her father, could feel this, and he put his arm about her and drew her closely, tenderly to himself.

"We'll always stick together, little girl," he said.

"Until," Janet reminded him good-naturedly, "until Mr. Wright comes along, you know." She smiled genially. She was frankly fond of men was Janet Mitcheltree. And yet, she was a bit sorry, possibly that there were so many of them—so many to choose from.

"Come on, you dear old stick-in-the-mud," she exclaimed, tugging at her father's arm. Then she stopped, and looked up at the lantern's light, so far above her, at the tapering point of the flag-staff.

"Look here, father," she went on, "I want to know, *tonight*, what you do that for. You've always put me off. But now I want to know. I *ought* to know."

Stephen Mitcheltree took his daughter's face in both his hands and looked down into her eyes. "It's a

compact, girlie," he said softly, "a compact that I made years ago. . . . Some time you'll know it all, but not now. It's a compact, girlie. That's enough to tell you now. Come on.

"Now, look a-here," he went on, as they walked through the little town, "you don't catch me stayin' out all hours o' the night. I'll take you down to the college all right. Then I'll cut it. I got in the habit once of going to bed early. It's a habit I can't break."

The walk was narrow in one spot, and as they went, the girl walked before him. As she did so, he placed one of his huge hands, unthinkingly, upon her shoulder, and tried to keep step with her as best he could. His hand was very heavy, and he gripped her shoulder as he might have gripped the shoulder of a man. She cried out with pain. He remembered himself and hastily dropped his hand to his side.

"Well," he went on, "what I want to know is, *how* are you going to get back home?"

She laughed aloud. "I'm a widow, father," she explained. "They'll all bring me home. I'm the oldest of the widows. They always take care of the widows, don't you see?"

"A widow?" mused Stephen Mitcheltree. "Well, well."

"A *college widow*," she answered, with good-natured impatience, for her father was a man who never could remember the modern vernacular, "and—and you can go home, and go to sleep. They'll *all* bring me home. I'm afraid," she went on, "they'll wake you up in the bargain."

But he shook his head. "Girlie," he said, "you're all I've got, and I've got to keep you safe. What's everybody's business is nobody's business. I want to know *just* how'll you get home."

She sobered. "If you want me to go into details," she said, flushing in the moonlight, "and specifications of defenses and such things—if you've *got* to know, it's Johnny Fortescue who's going to bring me home."

Stephen Mitcheltree sighed with relief. "If it's Johnny Fortescue," he

said gravely, "it's all right. He's solid, even if he does hail from New York way. I like Johnny Fortescue."

"I like him," assented Janet, "and besides, he's straight. He's the only man in his class who isn't a bigamist."

"A what?" gasped her father.

"A bigamist," she answered, clinging to her escort's arm; "a man who's engaged to more than one girl at a time. There's one thing I can say about Johnny. He's stuck to me through thick and thin."

"He—he ain't engaged to you?"

She nodded. "Of course," she answered, in a matter-of-fact way, "of course he is, until he's graduated. Now that he is graduated, why . . ." She stopped, confused.

"Now that he is graduated?" her father repeated.

"Stupid," she replied, in a wavering tone, "why, he'll go back to New York, of course."

"Of—" Stephen Mitcheltree had started in to repeat the last two words of her answer, when suddenly he stopped and caught her by the arm. He stretched his left arm out in front and pointed down the road, for they had left the busy part of the town behind them.

"Do you see that?" he exclaimed, his voice catching as he said it.

Janet looked, but she had been looking too much at the man in the moon, and her vision was blurred; and she had been thinking a bit too much of Johnny Fortescue, and—her vision was blurred.

"I—I don't see anything," she faltered, for fear had suddenly come upon her.

"I do," whispered Mitcheltree, "I do. I could see a thing like that for miles, I think. I've seen it, sleeping and waking. I've waited for it."

He *had* seen it. It was there to see; there was no doubt about it—none at all. For on ahead, creeping along cautiously, dodging the patches of moonlight and sticking to the shadows, was—a shape. But it wasn't the form

of it that had caught Mitcheltree's attention; it was the varied color. He *knew* shapes that looked like that.

"Wait a minute, girl," he whispered hoarsely.

Hastily they retraced their steps until they came to a small house, with a light inside. Mitcheltree knocked on the door. A woman opened, and at her side stood a man. From behind them the light streamed out into the road.

"It's me, Peters," said Mitcheltree, still in a half-whisper, "and douse that glim, will you? It's Janet and me." He talked in a low voice with Peters for an instant.

"You don't say so?" whispered Peters back again.

"I do," answered Mitcheltree, "and—it's a job for me. You stay where you are. I don't need help. But I want you to keep Janet here till I come back. If you'll do that . . ."

They took Janet in. Stephen Mitcheltree sped noiselessly down the road as though death were upon his heels. He was wonderfully lithe for a man of his weight.

"By George," he gasped to himself, "I'll get him, sure I will. And if it should be *him*, if it should be *him*!"

On and on he sped. And suddenly he saw distinctly what he had seen but vaguely before. The figure ahead darted easily across a wide patch of light. Mitcheltree had made no mistake.

For the man ahead was not clothed like other men. He was a man with stripes. In the moonlight they seemed like black-and-white stripes running horizontally across. But Stephen well knew that they were red-and-white stripes—the insignia of servitude at the prison at East Donaldson.

"If it should be *him*," he cried almost aloud, "if I should put him *back*!"

Suddenly the man ahead turned. He had heard Mitcheltree's footsteps, had known that he was pursued. He seemed bewildered, for he stood stock-still and waited.

"He can't have a gun," reasoned

Mitcheltree, "he couldn't *get* a gun." And on he sped.

In another instant the man of stripes was in his grasp, writhing, wriggling with pain, for when Stephen Mitcheltree gripped he gripped.

"I've got you," Mitcheltree exclaimed. Suddenly he swung the man about.

"How'd you get out?" he asked. "I didn't hear a gun. . . . Let me see your face, you. Let me see your face."

He turned the man's face up to the moon and looked upon it. It was not the face he had thought to see, nor for the instant did he note what face it was.

"I don't care so much about you now," he said. He felt carefully of the man's clothes to see whether he might have a gun. He was going to turn him loose.

"Say," said the man, shivering, "did *you* have a gun, Mr. Mitcheltree? Say, we never thought of guns. Gee whiz!"

"Who are you?" demanded Mitcheltree. He dragged him still further into the light. Then he almost screamed with surprise.

"It's Johnny Fortescue!" he yelled. He trembled. He didn't understand.

"Say, boy," he asked, shaking the other, "what are *you* doing in such rags?"

Johnny Fortescue laughed and shook himself free. "Where is Miss Janet?" he queried in return. But Mitcheltree still trembled.

"You're not going to show yourself to Janet in *those* clothes?" he faltered.

But Johnny Fortescue's self-possession had returned. He had upon him all the aplomb of a mortar-boarder of the University.

"Where is Miss Janet?" he insisted. Mitcheltree told him.

"Come on, then," Fortescue replied, dragging the elder by the arm; "come on, we'll get her. I'd have come for her tonight, but I couldn't do it in this garb. Not exactly, not *just* exactly, don't you see?"

Fortescue dragged Mitcheltree, who

still wondered, back to Peter's little cottage. There they found Janet. And from Janet's eyes when she saw the man of stripes there shone that strange fear; a shadow seemed to fall across her face.

"It's you, Johnny," she quavered. "What does it mean?"

Johnny seized her by one arm and her father by the other.

"You've both got to come with me," he said. "There'll be explanations further on."

Inside of ten minutes the explanation made itself manifest. They reached the University grounds. Strung from tree to tree there swung myriad Japanese lanterns. Over in one corner a huge bonfire turned night into day. And in the glare of it all some thirty men marched, with the regularity of clock-work, single file, each man raising his left foot high in the air as he walked, each man with his hand upon the shoulder of the man in front. And as they marched they crooned the song of the lock-step:

"For we are the lads o' the Lag  
Yo ho!

Oh, it's we are the lads of the Lag."

Johnny Fortescue, laughing at the discomfiture of his companions, left them on the edge of the grounds, and bounded like a deer across the campus, and joined his fellows with an impetus that threw them out of step. His voice could be heard above the rest.

"For *I* am a lad of the Lag."

When the song stopped and the march broke up with a whoop, there was a wild howl of approval from the male spectators, a shrill scream of applause from femininity. Suddenly the men of the Lag caught a glimpse of Janet and her father, and bounded over toward them as one man. But Johnny Fortescue got there first.

"If you *were* a lad of the Lag," growled out Stephen Mitcheltree, "you wouldn't be so proud of it, I guess."

"No," whispered Janet, and again that shadow crossed her face.

"Well, I'm not—*yet*," answered Johnny Fortescue as the rest of the lads came bounding down upon them.

"Who-o-o-op!" they yelled. "Three cheers for Steve Mitcheltree! What do you think of *this* game, Mr. Mitcheltree?" they asked, strutting before him proudly. "Last year's class were all cattle-punchers. *This* year, say, we went 'em one better, *this* time all O. K.

"Oh . . . *oh*, for we are the lads of the *Lag*."

"Who got it up?" asked Mitcheltree, slowly, soberly.

"It was Johnny Fortescue," they answered. Then they broke into the deep-mouthed chant that had rolled out to Johnny last Autumn on the football field:

"Oh, *Johnny*, Johnny Fortescue,  
We *didn't* know you could."

Stephen Mitcheltree drew his hand across his mouth and wiped away the care that had settled down upon him. He broke into a laugh. He gripped Johnny Fortescue once more by the shoulder and clapped him on the back.

"So long as it was Johnny Fortescue," he said, with a genial smile, "it's all right. Anything that Johnny does . . ."

"So glad you approve, Mr. Mitcheltree," cried a shrill, falsetto voice from the branches of a tree. Then there was a howl of laughter. Stephen Mitcheltree joined in it heartily. Care dropped from him, and the shadow left Janet's face. For, after all, it didn't make any difference to the howling maniacs of the University whether Stephen Mitcheltree approved or did not approve. They didn't care for anybody or anything. Their reckless spirit smote Stephen Mitcheltree; in an instant he was young again. He picked up Johnny Fortescue bodily, and with a whoop he hurled him into the crowd in front.

"Hooray!" yelled Stephen Mitcheltree.

"You're not going, father?" queried Janet.

Stephen Mitcheltree smiled slowly. "Not much, girlie," he answered. "I guess, after all, I'll stay and see it out. There's too much fun abroad tonight. I'll stay and see it out."

There was more fun later, when the little crowd broke up into bunches, and took the widows home—the college widows. No private interview with any college widow was permitted on that night. If any man lingered at the front gate, trying to gaze soulfully into the eyes of the girl he was going to leave, the small, particular bunch that had come with him would let the town know about it:

"Blest be the tie that binds. . . .  
Break it off,  
Break it off,  
Break it off!"

All the bunches rounded up at Mitcheltree's. It was logical. Mitcheltree's was their camping, stamping ground. Janet was the widow of *all* widows. It was very late. They were a bit tired, a bit sobered now, by the breaking up that was to rend them asunder on the morrow. As they sat there cross-legged on the big piazza, three men with long, official-looking clubs disturbed their sentimental peace.

"Hey, you fellows!" said one of the men.

"Hello, Charley," they answered in unison. "Don't get excited. It's only Charley Marshall—Marshal Charley Marshall, of the lock-up. *Grand* Marshal Charley Marshall. What's doin', Chollie? Eh, boy?"

The marshal stepped up to the foot of the stone steps. "Hey, you fellows," he said, "you got no right to dress up like that. . . . You're liable to get shot; more than that, it's against the law."

"What law, Chollie?"

"Go to the Legislature and get an act passed, Chollie."

"What you givin' us, Chollie?"

The marshal saw Mitcheltree in the darkness, and appealed to him. "I'll leave it to you, Mr. Mitcheltree," he said, "if it's right." He pointed to a distant hill-top on which rose, bleak and gray, a huge cluster of buildings. "There's the prison, Mr. Mitcheltree. If a man breaks out, we're supposed to look out for him, ain't we? Well, if we see a man like these here with them

stripes, what's goin' to happen? Shootin', maybe. Trouble, anyhow." He stopped suddenly, for an inspiration came to him.

"Say, you chaps, look here," he gasped, "suppose a man did get out tonight—how could we catch him? How would we know him, with all youse traipsin' about the town? You got to have some sense. How would we know which was him and which was you?"

There was applause at this, which the marshal could not understand. "Though I'll explain it, marshal," said Johnny Fortescue; "I'll translate. These pals of mine are e-lated because they can't be told from jailbirds, don't you see? You said a right smart thing, marshal. For the colonel's lady," he went on, borrowing as he went, "and Julia O'Grady are the same underneath their skins—or something like that. You're right, marshal. We're just as bad . . ."

"Just as good, you mean!" yelled the crowd.

"Just as good, Charley, as the lads up on the hill."

"Well," said the bewildered marshal, "if it don't happen any more, I s'pose . . ."

"Oh," returned another spokesman of the crowd, "but it's got to happen some more. This is *our* costume. We've got to stick to it. Marshal, look here; every year we'll straggle back here, and don these clothes; every year, maimed, lame, rich, poor, well, sick—all of us boys. . . ."

"All of us," agreed the crowd.

"We'll come back, every June, from now till doomsday, and from now till doomsday, once a year, we shall wear this garb."

"Take care some of youse don't wear it all the time," flashed back the marshal, whose wit was sharpening against the wit of the men on the porch above. Whereupon there was more applause.

The marshal turned away. "All I've got to say is that the authorities won't stand for it. It's all right for tonight. But it mustn't happen again.

Why, say, look a-here, suppose some gang up there—and the news o' this foolishness o' yours is bound to leak in up there—they're probably jokin' about it in whispers up there in their cells now—say, suppose a gang o' lifers or some of them should get on to it, hard? Say, this is serious, understand; I ain't foolin'. Suppose you should do it again, and they should find it out beforehand? An' supposin' they should get out while you're in these here rags? Say," he went on, addressing Fortescue, "we couldn't catch 'em, without takin' the risk o' killin' a half-dozen or so of you. That 'd be a pretty note. Take my advice, and don't be foolish. You leave it alone. I don't know much about your rights to do it—I'll admit that; and I don't know much about the law, but this here is a prison town—or at least *East Donaldson* is. A word to the wise, you know, bo; a word to the wise."

"Marshal," said Johnny Fortescue, "look well at me. There are three things in this world that are sure. One of them is taxes; one of them is death; the third is, that every member of this here class who isn't dead and who hasn't paid his taxes will march through this town in the rags of the lag, until the class spirit dies out or our legs drop off. Let us hope that neither ever happens."

"Amen!" responded the class. Then they chanted Charley out of the grounds:

"For we are the lads of the Lag,

Chollie Boy,

Yo hol for the lads of the Lag!"

The marshal and his myrmidons gave it up as a bad job and left. A deep silence fell upon the crowd, but it was soon broken by the voice of Johnny Fortescue.

"Mr. Mitcheltree," he said, "I don't see why you were so keen in trying to nab me tonight."

He pointed involuntarily toward the big gray buildings on the hill.

"If I saw any poor chap, who'd once got free," he went on, "I don't believe that I'd want to send him back."



Stephen Mitcheltree trembled. "It depends on who it is," he answered, with a significance that wholly escaped Fortescue, though Janet noted the emphasis and wondered. But Mitcheltree went on, in an impersonal way: "We wouldn't want a murderer at large here in Donaldson, now, would we?"

Johnny Fortescue shivered in turn. The shadow of the big prison seemed to be upon them all.

"Gee," said Johnny, "the University is lag enough for *me*. I wouldn't want to be up in that place on the hill. You know," he went on, "old Professor Sanders, who wanders in his lectures, was telling us about—what is it? New Zealand, Botany Bay, New South Wales, or some such place, where they used to transport the English. He knows everything, old Sanders does. He told us, as I remember, that they stopped sending outlaws down there about . . . well, in the forties or the fifties, or somewhere there. Do you remember that, Beasley?" he said to the fellow next to him, who nodded. "But," went on Fortescue, "here's the queer thing—the thing I never thought of. All the families down there, or most of 'em, they're rich, too, he says. Sanders says that they're just as— Well, thunder, no offense, Mr. Mitcheltree, but they're just as good as *you* are yourself. And yet, they're tainted with a— Well, down there they have a name for it. They call it the taint o' the lag. And they've got caste, yes, sir. There's a crowd down there that's got the taint and a crowd that hasn't. And the crowd that hasn't got it holds its head so blamed high . . . well, by George, if a chap is going to marry a girl down there, Miss Janet, and the girl's folks find out that the chap has got the taint in him, why, it's all off. Yes, sir. Well, it's a regular business, hiding this taint, down there. They get up pedigrees and family histories and change their names and do everything—to get rid of the taint o' the lag. There are some people living there now

whose fathers, think of it, whose fathers were transported back in the forties. Think of having your *father* with a taint of the lag upon him!"

Janet did not breathe, but Stephen Mitcheltree did.

"It's a taint, all right," said Stephen Mitcheltree. He yawned and stretched himself and rose. There was a little clear space in front of the open door. Within this space he began, nervously, unconsciously, to pace, eight feet one way, six feet to the other.

"It's a taint, all right," he said again. He kept on pacing. Suddenly he turned and stepped across the threshold.

"Good night, boys," he said, and laughed. It was a pleasant laugh. He knew all these boys; had known them for four years, for they had flocked constantly to Janet. "Pleasant dreams, lads o' the lag." Then he came back, and shook hands with each of them.

"I want you to keep straight, boys," he said. "I—I want you to be good . . . especially *you*," he whispered to Johnny Fortescue, for Johnny was his favorite. Then he went inside. As though his going were a signal, the class drifted down the stone steps and sang a little serenade in his honor. Then they sang a little ditty that Johnny Fortescue had made up for Janet—sang it softly, gently, like the sighing of a zephyr on a Summer night. Then they filed past Janet Mitcheltree one by one.

"Johnny Fortescue must go first," they declared; "no lagging behind to-night." Johnny cheerfully obeyed. And as they filed past her, each man leaned over her solemnly and kissed her hand. It was good-bye.

"It's only *au revoir*, though," they reminded her. "Next year, you know, Janet."

Silently they left her. "Next year!" whispered one of them to another. "Gee, next year, I suppose Janet will be married and settled down. Next year! A whole lot of things can happen in a year, but what do we care?"

"Yo ho, for the lads of the Lag!"

Janet closed up the big house. But she did not ascend to her room above. She crept into the big, dark drawing-room, and knelt down by the window and waited, breathlessly.

"Oh," she said finally, softly, to herself. Then she crept into the hall, and quietly opened the big door, and crept out. A man, clad in prison garb, was sitting in the darkness, on the top step. As she came out, he leaped to his feet. His breath came fast.

"I—I got away from 'em!" he said.

They were silent there for a moment, throbbing. Suddenly the man stretched out his arms toward her.

"Janet," he whispered tremulously, "I—I have *got* to have a kiss. Just one, Janet—just one."

She did not answer. She stood there, slightly swaying to and fro. But through all the dark he saw the light that was in her eyes. He strode swiftly forward and caught her tightly in his arms.

"Janet—girl!" he cried.

"Johnny—boy!" she whispered, warmly. Then some new, strange, insistent force surged within her and she caught him tightly by the arm.

"I . . . I can't say good-bye, Johnny," she half-sobbed, welcoming the kisses that fell upon her lips, "I—I can't let you go, Johnny boy."

He wound his arms about her and crushed his lips against hers in a final kiss. They were very young, and all this was very new.

"I love you, Janet girl," he whispered softly. And as she trembled in his clasp, he said it once more. "I love you."

"Good-bye, Johnny."

Then he released her and stepped back a pace. "It isn't good-bye," he answered; "I'm not going back, you know."

"Not back," she echoed, "not back to New York?"

"No," he answered.

"Why?"

"If there was no other reason," he said to her, "it would be on your account. But . . ."

"There *is* another reason?" she queried.

He nodded. She persisted.

"What is it, Johnny Fortescue?" she asked.

He laughed uncertainly. "*I don't know.*" He paused. "*I really don't,*" he went on. "*It's a reason made by other people than myself. And I don't know as I care to know the reason. I'm glad enough to stay. . . . Just one more kiss, little girl.*"

But she held him off. "Not one, Johnny Fortescue," she answered, with a wave of the hand, "not another one. You kissed me under false pretenses. I thought it was good-bye."

"Do you wish it were?" he asked.

For answer she stepped back into the big hall, closed the door upon him, and locked it, and went softly up the stairs.

Johnny strode down upon the lawn, glanced up into a window, saw a white face there in the darkness looking down upon him, kissed his hand, and waved his cap. Then he left.

"For *I* am a lad of the Lag!" he cried in stentorian voice as he made his way through town.

## II

### "FOR REASONS OF OUR OWN"

STEPHEN MITCHELTREE slowly drank his coffee and glanced at his daughter over the top of the morning paper. It was more than a month since the Donaldson college men had left town, some of them for the long vacation, some of them forever.

"When is Johnny Fortescue going back East?" he asked.

"He isn't going back," she answered.

Her father finished his cup, folded his paper, and crossed to her side and took her hand in his.

"Not going back?" he queried; "not going back?" A light burst in upon him.

"You don't mean to say, little girl," he began softly, "you don't mean to say . . ."

Janet Mitcheltree flushed prettily, but she shook her head. "I *don't* mean to say," she answered, "but I *do* mean to say that for reasons of his own—I don't know what they are—that he's going to stay here. He's going to make this place his home. He's going to live here." She spread out her hands. "That's all I know," she added.

Mitcheltree frowned. "That's a funny note," he said, half to himself, half to her, "a funny note. There's nothing to do here. There's nothing but the University and the prison and the cattle. What's he going to do? Does he know that?"

The girl shook her head. "He's going to do anything he can, he says." She stopped and rose to her feet.

"Father, father," she implored, "stop! Please stop—that."

Her father, in his wonder, had begun to pace out upon the floor that inevitable space eight by six. He stopped.

"It sometimes helps me think," he said to her, "and I'm thinking now. He's a chap worth while," he went on, sinking into a chair, "a chap worth while. I never knew but one man that I liked as well. And that man," he added, a shadow upon his face, "was one of my own kind, which Johnny isn't. Girl," he went on, "there's a thing that's worried me—that's kept on worrying me for the last five years. I've made money. I'm making money now. I want to make money for you and—for somebody else. It's—it's a duty. It's what I've got to do. There's not a cattleman here in the West that's done better than I have, except the Chicago men. There's the rub—the Chicago beef crowd. They're pushing us close. Look here"—he pointed to the first page of the paper—"read that, girlie, and you'll see how one man was crushed out by rates and rebates. It's creeping in on us, it's creeping in. It could be stopped if we only had some *men* in office, or men to fight the men in office." He laughed uneasily. "Girlie," he went on, "you've always known that your dad was a man with a past. By George, he's a man with a

present, now—a present that worries him more than the past could ever do. . . . Inside of three years more, if something isn't done, my cattle'll be left, starving on the hill-sides. I can see it. . . . If something isn't done. . . . So Johnny Fortescue is going to stay and punch cattle, eh? Well, good enough. He's got blood in him, he has. Good blood. He's as straight as a string. Johnny—I—I must have another talk with Johnny. The more I see that boy the more I like him."

For three days, off and on, Stephen Mitcheltree kept pacing off that space of six by eight. He didn't do it when Janet was present, but he did it when he thought most deeply, and he thought most deeply when he was alone.

"I . . . I've got to keep my end up," he told himself, "it's a part of the compact. The money I've made isn't my own. I've made it, but I'm holding it in trust, until . . . By George," he broke off suddenly and consulted a calendar, "it's only a question of months now, where it used to be years." He went back to his pacing. "Johnny Fortescue." Suddenly he smote himself full upon the mouth. "Johnny Fortescue," he yelled aloud, "the very man . . . the very man!"

The next time he saw Johnny he captured him bodily and dragged him into his little den.

"What's the trouble, Johnny?" he asked.

"Isn't any," answered Johnny. But Johnny's face was puzzled.

"Not going back, eh?"

Johnny shook his head.

"Why not?"

"Don't know."

"When did you find it out?"

"The day I was graduated."

"Reasons of your own?"

"No."

Johnny Fortescue drew up his chair. "I was sent out here," he went on, "to grow up with the West. It's already grown up, but I'm going to catch up if I can. That's all I can tell you. There's more, but I don't know what

it is. There are reasons—somebody's reasons. I don't know what they are. I don't care so much."

"What are you going to do?"

"I get ten dollars a week from the East now," answered Johnny. "I can support myself on that. . . . I don't have to do anything, but," and there was in his voice a note of discouragement tinged with determination, "I am going to do something, even if I have to round up cattle for you at night. I've got to do something, don't you see?"

Stephen Mitcheltree squinted up his face. "John Fortescue," he said, "I want to tell you something about cattle that you don't know, and I want to tell you something about men that you don't know. I'll begin at the last end first. You've come to the most God-forsaken hole in the State. I don't know why, except, possibly, because the prison is here, poisoning everything. The University wouldn't have been here, only it was here first. But nobody's here, except the people that've got to be here. There's nobody in the whole county that amounts to anything, except—I'll tell you. Over at Jefferson, the county seat, there are some people. There are three lawyers there, Johnny. . . ." He broke off suddenly. "Johnny," he went on finally, "you remember the night you talked about the taint o' the lag?"

Johnny nodded. "Boy," went on Mitcheltree, "everybody in this county is tainted. Over in the county seat the bar consists of three lawyers. They're tainted. The whole county gang is tainted, but not with the taint o' the lag. They're tainted, Johnny, with another thing—with the P. Q. & C. There's the rub. And it goes down through families. It's like the Botany Bay people you talked about. Every man that's born here is owned, body and soul, by the P. Q. & C. And the day of that big railroad system is coming. They're rich and powerful, but, my boy, they're going to be bigger yet. I know; I can see. Look here. Nobody that comes here from the out-

side ever stays here, except only those chaps on the hill." He pointed to the big gray prison. "But you're going to stay, and you're not tainted—not with anything."

John Fortescue rose and paced the room, lengthwise, as far as he could, in full, long strides.

"I see," he exclaimed hopefully, "I see. It's what I've always wanted. It's the law."

"It's the law," assented Mitcheltree, "and it's fight, it's fight—just as I've seen you fight on the gridiron, boy. I want to beat 'em out. We want to beat 'em out together. If you can live meantime, go into the law."

"I'll go into the law," exclaimed John Fortescue. He crossed over and shook the other man by the hand. "Do you know," he said, "if I hadn't had you to suggest it, if I hadn't seen a chance to do something straight, I'd have done something crooked, I believe. I'd hold up a stage-coach, or be a gambler. It seems as though I had it in my blood." He pulled out his watch and opened it. On the inside of the cover there was a milk-white shield, without inscription. "I showed it to Janet," he said; "it's my mother's coat-of-arms. She's dead now. But she always prided herself on that coat-of-arms. It stands for absolute purity." He smiled proudly. "There's no taint on *that*, is there?—no blot on that escutcheon? . . . Yet somehow, I'm so fond of doing things that if I didn't have something straight, I believe that I'd go crooked. The law's the thing—the law. We'll beat 'em out."

Mitcheltree nodded and held out his hand. The lad shook it.

"There's something that I'd like to tell you—about myself, Mr. Mitcheltree," he went on. "Of course, I'm a stranger here, and I've been friendly with you and with Janet. It's only right that you should know that I'm straight. My family live in Brooklyn. My father is dead; he died many years ago. My mother also. I didn't know either of them. My family consists of three brothers, all much older than

myself. One is a clergyman; one is a surgeon; one is a broker. They're all married and settled down. I've told Janet all about them. They're all doing well, they're all respectable. They're what you call proud—just a bit stiff, you know. But they're *good*. And I—you can verify these things if you want to—I can give you references. I'd like to have you think, you know, that I'm not any of the flotsam and jetsam. My family have been just as good and solid, and they are, as you, yourself, Mr. Mitcheltree. I wanted you to know it, that's all; and I'd be glad to have you look me up."

"You don't need looking up, Johnny Fortescue," said Mitcheltree. "You wear your coat-of-arms upon your face, you do. It's all right, boy, all right."

Johnny left, stopping to chat casually with Janet on his way out. But he did not spend much time, for he wanted to get back into his boarding-house and think things over. He was glad to know that there was a chance. And yet, why had this all come about, in this way?

He fumbled in his bureau drawer, and found a letter and sat down and read it carefully, for the sixth time.

It was headed, "The Manse, Wiloughby street, Brooklyn." It was written upon a typewriter, in the professional script type of a clergyman's dictated sermons:

"I cannot too fully impress upon you," said the letter, "the absolute necessity of living permanently where you are. You were sent West with a definite purpose in view. There was no one else to send. You are a younger brother, with the duty of implicit obedience resting heavily upon you. Remember you are, above all things, a Fortescue. The Fortescues do not shirk their duties, they do not shift their burdens. . . . You will not always be kept in ignorance of our purpose. In a year or more—say, two years or so, you will know, you will understand. You will do more—you will approve. For the present you must be satisfied without explanation. For the present our course and yours must be followed without question. The only thing that we can say to you is that the course we have adopted we have adopted for reasons of our own. Its wisdom will be shown to you in time. God bless you.

"Your brother, "JAMES.

"P. S.—We have considered it wise to say to you, at this time, that your good mother died at the time of your birth. This catastrophe was not due to you. Your mother had her duties and her burdens. They killed her.

"P. P. S.—I enclose you cheque for the usual amount."

Johnny Fortescue leaned his head on his hand.

"For reasons of our own," he repeated. "What does it mean, what *can* it mean?"

"I don't care what it means," he finally announced to himself, "I'll do just what they say. And meantime," he added, "I'll do just what Mitcheltree advises, too."

He went up to the county seat and for two years he studied law.

### III

#### THE TROUBLED EYES OF JANET MITCHELTREE

JOHNNY FORTESCUE looked at the girl in amazement. The color left his face.

"Why, hang it all, Janet," he said tremulously, "you don't mean that you're going to *hesitate* about it—that you've really *got* to think it over? No, listen. You haven't forgotten that kiss—those kisses—that night?" He smiled forlornly. "It's a long, long while between kisses, girlie. It's been two years and more. I want another one, and—I want an answer to my question, don't you see? I've asked and asked and asked. Why not? Your father—you don't have to ask your father. I've asked him. *He's* all right. And there isn't anybody else, is there? . . . If there were I'd . . . Janet, Janet, look here, is there a reason, after all, is there? Or are you only fooling?" He drew his hand across his forehead. "Why, girl, I've been working like a dog these last two years, and—just for you. Come, do the next best thing. Tell me the reason why. Well, anyway, here goes. I've *got* to kiss you, anyhow. I'm going to do it, too."

There was a silent struggle—mostly one-sided, it is true. In another instant Janet's sweet, warm face and her tousled hair were pressed, perforce, against his face, and somehow, even against Janet's will, he *knew*. But still she rebelled.

"Tomorrow," she pleaded, "tomorrow . . . or next week. Johnny, I can't. There is a reason. No, I—I can't."

He looked into the depths of her dark eyes, and he saw there the trouble and the fear that he had so often noted. What did it mean? Was that expression meant alone for him? What were these mysteries surrounding him? It seemed, suddenly, that he was like a leper, shunned, somehow, by his own family, by mankind. For two years he had silently compared himself with other men, physically, mentally; he could see no difference. He was sane, that much was sure. And yet, in the eyes of Janet Mitcheltree, for him alone, there was a living terror. What did it mean?

He went—put off, as he had been put off before, by Janet.

When he had gone Janet hastened into her father's little den and threw herself, weeping, into the big chair in the corner. Her father found her there.

"Isn't there any way out of it, father?" she pleaded. "Johnny wants me and I want him so much. . . . Isn't there a way out? I—I've got to tell him, father."

"Tell him, then," her father said easily.

A shivering sigh escaped her. "I—I can't," she wailed; "you don't know how I put it off and put it off."

"If he wants you, little girl, he won't care. Bless you, I know these chaps."

"You don't know Johnny," she said, the trouble widening her eyes; "you don't know *him*. He's proud of that milk-white shield he carries—proud of his family. He says it's only his pride—or it *was*, till he met me—that kept him good. And when he knows about *this* . . . Oh, you don't know him, father."

"Don't tell him, then," returned her father. "Maybe he'll never know. Nobody else knows it about here, except . . ."

He pointed with a steady hand to the hard gray buildings on the hill. He drew the back of his hand across his mouth. "I did it clever, Janet girl," he went on. "I came out, and went away. Nobody knew me here anyhow. I come from across the borders of the State. But I had to stay right here. It was a part of a compact, girl. I made a big detour, and came back, and hitched up with Boggs back over the hills as a cattle-puncher. Boggs never knew, and his men never knew. The officers up there, they've seen me now and then. We never nod as we go by; they're too decent about it. But outside of them, there's nobody. I did it clever; and I've prospered. I'm glad I did, for there was a compact. . . ."

"Father," the girl pleaded, "tell me. You—why were *you* there?"

"I was going to tell you first, girlie, that our name *ain't* Mitcheltree. It's Terwilliger—that's our old name. And yet Mitcheltree is my *real* name, too. It's the only name I've ever really lived under—lived right. I did it clever."

"Father," she pleaded, "what . . .?"

He glanced at her soberly. A little tremor smote him. "It was a case of murder, Janet. I went up for five years as an accessory before the fact. It was a case of murder."

There was deep silence for minutes. "You'll know it all, some day, Janet," her father pleaded. But he didn't dare to look at her; he could not meet the terror in her eyes.

"It was a good thing for me that you were waiting for me when I came out, girl," he went on softly. "If I hadn't had something to love—a curly-headed little shaver like you were. . . . You didn't know then; it was all plain sailing then. Now—" he rose and paced that rectangle, six by eight, six by eight—"now, hang it, I'm Stephen Mitcheltree, of Donaldson. I'm as good as any other man, I guess."



He could not find the courage to look at Janet, for she was looking at him with the eyes of somebody else—of years ago—eyes that bit into and tore open a wound that rankled.

"I'm as good as any man today," he blurted out.

"Father, *stop!* Don't—don't talk that way. I can't stand it. Don't."

He sank into the chair at his desk. "I'm as good as any man," he muttered.

Janet crept away and into her own room upstairs. Under any other circumstances she might have hung about her father's neck. But, now—murder and . . . She had that day seen written on her father's face the thing she had never seen there before.

"Jailbird"—that was what it was. She had known it all along. She had felt the shame, the disgrace of it all along; but she had never felt the *fact* as she had felt it now. She trembled.

"I've got to tell Johnny," she told herself, "and when I tell him it will be—good-bye."

#### IV

#### JOHN OUGHELTREE STEPS DOWN AND OUT

JOHN OUGHELTREE sat and waited patiently. He had been very patient all these years; he could afford to be patient now. And yet, when years stared him in the face, it had not been so hard as now, when it was a matter of minutes. He waited.

Suddenly he heard the steady ring of a guard's footsteps upon the iron gallery. In another instant a barred door had been flung open.

"Time's up," said the guard. John Ougheltree rose slowly from his bench and looked the man full in the face. "I don't know as I *want* to go," he said. But he went on, before, wondering how it would all seem after these many years. He stumbled somehow down the stairs. At their foot an open door led into a little room. In it were two men, also uniformed. They nodded to him curtly, but not unkindly.

"There are your clothes," they said to him. He flushed. Slowly he removed the red-and-white striped garments that he wore, and with fumbling, nervous fingers adjusted the new black suit that the Government provided. He was tall and thin, was Ougheltree, and his hair was gray. The new suit in spots was too loose, in spots too tight. He smiled forlornly as he saw its uncanny fit.

"I guess it's better than the other suit, though," he faltered.

They took him into a little office and opened a big safe.

"Here, sign your name," they said. He signed it. Then they handed him a small roll of bills. "Here's what you've earned," they told him. Then, suddenly, somebody opened three big heavy doors, and the sunlight poured as suddenly in upon him.

"You can go now, Ougheltree," they said. He stood bewildered for an instant, brushing his hand across his eyes. Then he turned toward the men. They held out their hands to him.

He passed on through the doors, and for the first time in more than twenty years he felt the free air upon his face.

He strode uncertainly down the narrow road. He put his hand to his head.

"Now, let's see," he faltered. "What's the thing to be done first?"

He drew from his pocket a square white envelope. It was addressed and sealed.

"This is the hardest thing," he murmured to himself. "I'll do the hardest thing first."

Johnny Fortescue sat in his office in Main street, Donaldson, over the First National Bank. He was staring out of the window. In his hand he held a cheque; a new, crisp cheque on a New York bank.

"They—they've *doubled* it," he said to himself. It pleased him. He had plenty of uses, even for the little money his family sent him.

"Why," he gasped, "I can get

married on this! We won't have to wait, Janet and I. Thunder! what is the matter with Janet, anyhow?"

As though in answer to his query a boy came bounding in. He bore a little note. It was from Janet, and ran:

Johnny, I want you to come to me to-night. I've got something to tell you and I must tell you *now*.

JANET.

He laughed. "It's all right," he exclaimed, waving the cheque in the air, "it's all right, all right. I *know* it is." He little knew that Janet at that very moment was lying face downward on her bed, with tear-stained face, shaking with sobs, her frame worn and weary with sleepless nights.

"It's all O. K.," he told himself gleefully.

He stopped, for he had heard another footstep on the stair. It was a lagging, faltering footstep—one that seemed, somehow, afraid.

In another instant a man had entered; a man in an ill-fitting suit of clothes, a man with an unholy pallor upon him, with a gray shadow across his face. He stood for an instant, staring at the young lawyer.

"Are you Mr. Fortescue?" he asked at length, his voice faltering.

"Sit down," said Johnny.

"Are you Johnny Fortescue?" went on the man. He sank down into a chair and wiped his damp brow with a handkerchief.

"My name is Ougheltree," he went on painfully. He stopped short. "The hardest thing first," he kept repeating to himself.

"*Your* name is Ougheltree," he suddenly flared out, rising to his feet. "*Your name is Ougheltree, and—I'm your father, Johnny boy!*"

"You?"

The old man nodded.

"I thought you were dead."

"So I was—almost, Johnny."

"But . . ." Then Johnny smiled. Things were getting a bit clear at last. "My name is Fortescue," insisted Johnny.

"Your mother's name was," assented the man. "They took *that* name, the boys, after . . . They took that name and moved East, after . . ."

"After?"

"After I was sent up to the big prison here on the hill." He sank back again into the chair. Suddenly he smote the desk. "Hang it," he cried querulously, "why didn't *they* tell you all this time? Why did they leave it for me? But I know, I know. They thought you would not obey instructions if you knew. Now you know. Now you know why you were sent here to school, why you were told to stay here. It was so you could wait for me here, and keep me here." He laughed bitterly. "To keep me *here*—away from the Fortescues, my sons, the ministers and the doctors and the brokers of New York. That's why it was. Here, read it. I'm telling you God's truth. Here, take the proof and read it, if you will."

He passed over the fat white envelope. Johnny almost fainted when he saw it. Yes, it was true. He knew those envelopes. He tore the letter open. Yes, there it was, the same old heading, "The Manse, Willoughby street, Brooklyn." He knew it. He didn't have to read it to verify what the old man had said.

"You were the goat, boy," said his father; "you were the youngest and you didn't have any family, and no ties, and it was you who had to share the Ougheltree shame. . . . I'm glad it *was*. I've never seen you, Johnny. For a long time I didn't know you were in existence. I . . . Why, I'm your *father*, Johnny boy!"

He gloated over the young lawyer as he said it. Old Ougheltree was just beginning to feel freedom. It intoxicated him. It *was* worth while to be outside—to have somebody to love, to care for you. But he stopped thinking, for suddenly Johnny Fortescue had staggered back to the wall, one hand to his own throat. He was almost speechless.

"I—I'm just beginning to understand," he gasped hoarsely to his

father. "I—this thing ruins me. Ruins me! You see, I—I've got a standing here in Donaldson."

His father nodded. "I understand," he said shamefacedly, "and we've got to keep it quiet. Nobody need know, *nobody* need know. Maybe nobody'll find out. I'll go off over the hills. I'll pretend to be a client . . . anything. I only want to see you sometimes, boy. I—I've got to see you sometimes, boy."

"You don't understand!" cried Johnny. "There are people that have got to know, people that I *must* tell." He pulled from his pocket the little note Janet had sent him and showed it to his father.

"There's one of them who's got to know. . . . Oh, why," he wailed, "didn't my brothers tell me? I've lived here under false pretenses. I've told these people—this girl. . . . My heavens, I *love* this girl. I've told her and her father that I'm as straight as a die—straight as a string; that my family is . . . Think of it! And now," he gasped again, "on me is this taint—the taint—o'—the lag!"

The other man had risen. "A girl?" he faltered. "I didn't know; I hadn't figured on that. Look here, Johnny, *don't* tell her—*don't*."

"I've got to," returned Johnny. Then he pulled himself together. "Sit down," he commanded. "Let me read this letter. We've got to think things out."

He read it slowly, to the end. And at the end there was this one sentence that smote him:

You were named John, pursuant to your mother's dying wishes. God bless you.

Your affectionate brother,

JAMES.

The tears came into his eyes. After all, it was his father, his own father, who was in hard case. At one time he had been a man, a man whom his mother had *loved*, a man whom she had forgiven, a . . . *man*.

"Do you mind telling me," he said finally, in a gentler voice, "what you were sent up for, so long ago?"

The elder man nodded. "I was

mixed up in a case of homicide," he said. Johnny Fortescue shuddered. Evidence—he was a lawyer. These things weren't done on wind. There must have been evidence. The conviction must have been proper. It was too much. Janet . . . But he pushed all these things into the back part of his head. He forced himself into the contemplation of the immediate things—the things to be done now.

"What are we going to do first?" he queried of his father.

The old man nodded, a bit vivaciously. "I want you to come with me, boy," he said. He waved his hand. "No, not as my son; as my lawyer. There's a man in town that owes me a good turn. I haven't seen him for a mighty sight of years. I don't know how much he's changed. But if he hasn't changed, there's some amends that I can make for you. There's some money coming to me, lad, if my memory serves me right."

"I don't want any money," said Johnny Fortescue. "Money can't—Come on," he said, just a bit roughly, "we'll go and see this man. Where does he live?"

"Come on," said the elder man, shambling down the steps; "we'll find his place."

"What's his name?"

"I don't know," answered the other.

"Where does he live?"

"I don't know that, either . . . I can only find him by a sign."

"What sign?"

For answer his father pointed into the sky. "Let's get out in the open, and we'll find it, lad, we'll find it. I'd know it if I saw it. It's a flag-staff, boy. Look, lad, there it is, there it is!"

"A flag-staff," repeated Fortescue wonderingly. They stumbled on. It was late in the afternoon. They drew up before the house of Stephen Mitchell-tree.

"You're not going in here?" exclaimed Fortescue.

The other man looked up at the house with awe in his countenance.

"It can't be," he began. Then he nodded with a certainty that could

not be shaken. "But that there's the flag-staff, boy. I know its top and I know its height. Come on, boy, come on."

Like a man in a dream, Johnny Fortescue obeyed. The other man pulled him on, entering the house almost as of right. And as he crossed the threshold, John Ougheltree uttered three soft whistles. From the inside of the house there came the odor of cooking. Supper was preparing. Again John Ougheltree whistled softly.

Suddenly, a man with a white face, but with a glow in his eyes, came bounding out. It was Mitcheltree. He stood there aghast.

"Ougheltree," he exclaimed, "you're out too soon! I would have been there if . . . But man, you're out too soon."

John Ougheltree nodded. "I was pretty good," he said, "and besides, they changed the rule. That's it. They give more time allowance now than they used to do." He stepped back awkwardly. "This here," he said, "is my lawyer, Mr. Fortescue. I picked him up as I came along, for company. That's all. I didn't bring him here because he's a lawyer."

For he had seen the distrust gather in the face of Mitcheltree. But young Fortescue never faltered.

"Mr. Mitcheltree," he said, without the slightest hesitation, "you might as well know the truth. This man is my father. He's been incarcerated for over twenty years, up there, on a charge of murder. You've got to know it, first or last, and—I've got to tell Janet . . ."

Mitcheltree gazed upon him open-mouthed. "So you're John Ougheltree's son?" he exclaimed. "I thought there was something about you that I liked, that I was *used* to, so it seems. John Ougheltree's son? Well, well!"

But Fortescue had listened with unhearing ears. He had heard only what he himself had said. He had put himself straight. In his bewilderment he did not see that these two men knew each other well; that there was something in common between them

that made everything right. He only knew that he had said what he had to say to Janet's father, and now he must say the same thing to Janet.

"I want to see Janet," he said to Mitcheltree. But Mitcheltree was busy.

"Ougheltree," said Mitcheltree, "before you say another word," and the steel that was in his eyes glittered, "tell me about Challoner."

"He's tried to escape three times," returned Ougheltree; "three times. He's been brought back each time."

"I want to see Janet," persisted Fortescue. Old Mitcheltree went to the foot of the stairs and called:

"Janet!"

Janet came; she came, almost unseeing. Mitcheltree led her into the library on the left, silently. He hardly knew what he was doing, for he was greatly excited.

"She's in there, man," he said to Fortescue; "go on. Leave us alone, John Ougheltree and me. Three times, eh. . . ."

Fortescue braced himself. He went in to Janet.

He found her, tear-stained, troubled. He started back, and so did she, for she had not known that *he* was there. But her appearance was significant.

"Then you *know*?" he asked her.

"What?" she queried, wondering.

"Haven't you heard? Listen. I've got to tell you. Then I won't bother you any more. Listen, Janet. I'm going to stay away, but—"

She trembled. "But I'm going to be honest, first. I can't marry you, you know."

She knew. She was ready for it. "Janet, girl," he went on stiffly, "do you remember the night, so long ago when . . . when we talked about the taint o' the lag? Do you remember that?"

Did she? It was the night he had first kissed her.

"I never thought," he went on, his heart sinking, "when I showed you my milk-white shield, that it would come to this. But it had to come. It's all clear now—the taint o' the lag." He drew himself up. "Listen, Janet.

Look at me. Upon me is the taint o' the lag. Do you understand? My father's in there. He's just come out of prison. He has served a term, a long, long term—for murder."

Janet stood, white-faced, motionless. "That ends it," said Fortescue. "I won't bother you any more. Good-bye."

With a wild cry she threw her arms about his neck and nestled against him, kissing him, as one who had been starved for want of kisses.

"Janet," he cried, "doesn't it signify? Why, I won't let you—I won't let you sacrifice yourself."

"Johnny," she whispered tremulously, "kiss me, kiss me. Johnny, I'm so glad, so glad!"

"Glad?"

"Yes, Johnny boy, glad." She laughed hysterically. "I'm awfully glad. For, you know, *my* father is a murderer, too. The taint o' the lag is on me!"

Then Johnny understood, he understood everything. He understood the trouble in Janet's eyes.

"Let me see if it's there now, dear," he said. He looked. It had disappeared. There was to be no more terror for Janet.

"Janet, girl."

"Johnny, boy."

When Mitcheltree and Johnny's father came in from the next room they found the two, oblivious of all else, clinging tightly to each other, in the farthest corner of the sofa in the darkest corner of the room.

"Just one more kiss," said Johnny Fortescue.

## V

### THE TAINT OF THE P. Q. & C.

It was a week later. Three men sat in the law office of John Fortescue. One of them was Mitcheltree, one was Ougheltree, and the other one was Fortescue himself.

"Johnny," said Stephen Mitcheltree finally, "there are two jobs I got

for you. I'll take the easy one first, contrary to general rules."

He rose and began his six-by-eight course, as he always did when he had to think things out. "I'm worth a mighty sight of money, Johnny," he went on, "money, cattle, land. It's all got to be cut in two. I've made it fair and square. I've dug it out dollar by dollar in the last fifteen years. It don't belong to me—not all of it. There was a compact, counselor. According to the compact you've got to cut it clean in two. Half of it stays with me, half of it goes to old John Ougheltree."

Fortescue's father stumbled to his feet in pathetic protest. "No, no," he cried, the tears gathering in his eyes, for he was very forlorn, "I won't have it, I won't take a cent. You made it, you did the work. I . . ."

Mitcheltree turned upon him. "What did *you* do for me, John Ougheltree?" he demanded.

Ougheltree spread his hands deprecatingly. "I did nothing," he pleaded; "I got caught, that's all. It was the evidence. It wasn't you."

"It *was* me," thundered Mitcheltree, "me with a five years' sentence, getting out and breathing God's free air, and you staying there for twenty. There was a compact, and it's going to be lived up to. I've got the *details* here, and young Johnny'll work it out."

The other freedman gripped the arm of Mitcheltree. "I won't take it, Steve," he said firmly.

"All right," answered Mitcheltree, "it goes into the gutter for the first man to pick up. I'll tell you, if *you* won't take it, mark my words, I'll give it to . . ."

John Ougheltree caught at his words. "That's right," he eagerly exclaimed "give it to your girl, Janet. Give it to her—or to Johnny, if he's going to be your son-in-law."

Stephen Mitcheltree shook his big forefinger. "Janet, nor Johnny either, won't get a smell of it, Jack," he answered; "if *you* won't take it, I'll send it to your son James, the clergyman of Brooklyn—*that's* what I'll do."

Ougheltree sank back into his chair. "You can give it to me," he assented.

Mitcheltree winked at Johnny. "I thought so," he commented. He passed over a dozen documents. "You can get to work on *that*, counselor," he said.

"What's the next thing?" queried Counselor Fortescue.

Stephen Mitcheltree sat down, drawing his chair close to the desk and folding his arms upon it.

"The next thing," he said, with a frown, "is to see whether there's going to be any fortune to divide. . . . Counselor, the first gun has been fired. We've been skirmishing and sending out our scouts. But now the first gun has been fired. Cast your eyes on that."

He passed over a square, yellow, official sheet of paper. This is what it said:

PACIFIC, QUINCY & CHICAGO RAIL-  
ROAD COMPANY

Keno Branch, Freight Office  
Cattle Shipping Department

July 15, 190—

STEPHEN J. MITCHELTREE, Esq.,  
Donaldson Station.

DEAR SIR:

We have yours of the 1st and 10th inst., directing us to ship three hundred head of cattle from your siding in Donaldson. We regret to say that we have no cars at present. The Southern orders, placed before yours, have kept us very busy. There is no prospect for immediate shipment on our line. Under the circumstances we suggest your notifying some other freight road. When we get sufficient rolling stock back from present trips we shall be glad to accommodate.

Respectfully,

P. Q. & C.  
per STAPE.

"You read it once," said Mitcheltree, "read it again." The lawyer complied. He read it carefully, so carefully that when he lifted his head he had a picture of it on his brain.

"Well?" he said slowly.

"Well," answered Mitcheltree, "there's two big lies in that there letter. They've *got* cars, and they know darn well that there ain't another line to ship on. They've got me, and they've got me cold. Now look a-here, you know what's gone before.

I didn't kick when they raised the rates. I didn't kick when they were givin' other growers the fair deal that they weren't givin' me. I've succeeded in this cattle business because I know how to raise cattle cheap. I could stand a big rate, or a turn-down on a rebate now and then. They thought they had me discouraged long ago. They hadn't. But now. . . . And say, boy, look at them cattle out there on the hills. What's goin' to become of them? My money's tied up in 'em; your dad's money is tied up. . . . Look. Think of it, boy. It's a shame, an infernal shame!"

"How do you know?" queried the counselor-at-law, "that they've got the cars? How do you know?"

Stephen Mitcheltree laughed. "Every independent cattle grower in the State knows it," he said. "Why, blame it, the trust can't use up half the cars it's got or the railroad's got, either. It's a game, a game that's been goin' on for years. It's a game of freeze-out, boy, of letting independent cattle freeze, starve, grow old, rot, dry up on the hills. *You* know."

Johnny Fortescue sniffed. *This* was the sort of thing he liked; it was just what he wanted. Some instinct had come down to him from somebody along the line—from his own father, probably—the love of a game for the sake of the game. *This* was a game. He was silent for five full minutes.

"Mr. Mitcheltree," he said, "there's no trick about these things. What you need is not cleverness, but method. You tell me that they've got the cars; that every cattleman knows it. Where's the evidence? *Who has seen the cars?* Now, wait. *You've* got your work cut out as well as I have. I want witnesses who can go today. I want . . ."

"We'll go," returned Mitcheltree; "John Ougheltree and I will go."

Fortescue sobered. "Of what value is your testimony, standing alone? Why, there are fifty men in a freight yard—fifty men, twenty of whom are ready and willing to swear that there isn't a car in the place. Besides,



there's one thing you've got to face, first as last. The testimony of yourself and of my father isn't worth a pinch of snuff."

"Why not?"

"*You've both of you been convicted of a crime.*"

Stephen Mitcheltree winced. But he fell back and glanced admiringly upon his counsel. "By George, Johnny," he said, "I didn't make a mistake when I picked *you* out, at any rate!"

"Beating this railroad," went on the lawyer, "is a matter of preponderance of evidence. Look here. Call up every cattleman in the State—every man you're sure of. Take ten of them—more, if you can get them. *Go* to Keno. *See* the cattle cars they've got. If they haven't got any there, go to Port Pines. Keep on. Keep on until you find enough empty cattle cars to carry three *thousand* head. Then come back to me."

They obeyed his instructions. They located enough cars to carry five thousand head of cattle. They found them at Keno. It was unnecessary to go farther.

"Now write 'em again."

Mitcheltree wrote, and received the same response.

"What now?" he asked of Johnny Fortescue.

"Write 'em again," said Johnny. "What we want is documentary evidence."

Again he wrote, receiving the same response.

"*Now*," said Johnny, "tell 'em that *you*—don't mention anybody else—that *you understand* they've got lots of cars at Keno."

Mitcheltree obeyed. The railroad answered. "These cars are laid up for repairs," they replied glibly. Fortescue was ready for them.

"Send a corps of artisans—men from Donaldson here; men you can trust, and let 'em worm in there somehow and look 'em over. There are *some* chaps here who have got it in for the P. Q. & C."

These men went, and came back. Five of them were former railroad

men, and they had been able to see the cars. "Sound as a dollar," they reported. They told their stories. Every story went down in black and white. Johnny Fortescue was making up a book.

"What about them cattle on the hills?" asked Mitcheltree.

"Sorry," said Johnny, "they'll have to rot, that's all. Write more letters; get more answers. Never stop. And, look here, *never* get mad, until *I* say the word. . . ."

Finally he said the word. "Now," he told Mitcheltree, "you write the railroad and tell them that if they don't perform their public duties, you'll place the whole thing in the hands of ex-Judge Bertram Beasley, of Jefferson. You understand?"

"Beasley?" gasped Mitcheltree. "Why, I wouldn't touch him with a ten-foot pole! Why, he's—he's a railroad man himself."

"Exactly," returned Johnny drily. "I understand that, and so does the P. Q. & C."

Mitcheltree obeyed. "What next?" he said.

"Now," said his lawyer after the lapse of a few days, "*go* to Beasley and tell him, *not* what you *know*, but what you suspect. Say nothing about evidence. Tell *him* to get the evidence. Pay him a retainer, a good one, well worth while."

Mitcheltree obeyed. Ex-Judge Beasley took the retainer without turning a hair, and wrote a letter, a stiff letter, to the railroad company. He wrote it in the presence of Mitcheltree and gave it to him to mail. Then after Mitcheltree had left, the ex-judge called up the P. Q. & C. on the 'phone. They understood each other, did the ex-judge and the P. Q. & C.

"Well," finally said Mitcheltree to Johnny Fortescue impatiently, "here's two months gone and nothing doin'."

"Exactly," returned Fortescue. "If a whole year goes and nothing doing, I shall not be surprised."

"But—the Winter," gasped Mitcheltree. "You've got to think of that."

"I've got to think of beating the

P. Q. & C.," returned his counsel; "*that* takes up all my time."

He sent for Mitcheltree a week later. "Go up to Darby," he commanded, "and order ten *new* cattle cars at Petersen's Freight Car Factory. Don't order 'em in your own name. Order 'em in the name of some cattle-man up-State. Do it right away."

"What for?"

"I told you," returned Fortescue, "that it wasn't cleverness that we're going to fight with. It's evidence. *You* would say that we've got plenty of evidence now to fight with. Maybe we have. They *had* plenty of cars, didn't they? Suppose the Court believes they didn't? Suppose the Court believes they were on the crippled track held for repairs? We can't lug a hundred cars into court, can we? You get those cars—new ones, and at Petersen's shop. Don't get 'em anywhere else. Then we'll see."

The cars came in time. "Now, load 'em up," commanded Fortescue. The order was obeyed.

"Now," said Fortescue, "tell the railroad to come and get 'em. First, let your five railroad men and your ten cattlemen look 'em over. And keep your cattle loaded until I tell you to take 'em out."

The railroad company replied courteously, this time, that it would haul the cars. It didn't. It reported, two days later, that two engines had broken down. It would send again next day. It did. The engineer who drove the engine down was slightly disappointed.

"Gee," he grinned, "they didn't s'pose you'd keep your cattle loaded on, I guess!"

Inasmuch as there seemed no way out, he telephoned for instructions; then he came back to the siding.

"Those cars are too big; they're too long, an' too high, an' too wide. It's agin' our rules. We can't haul them."

Fifteen men had heard him telephone; fifteen men had heard his refusal; fifteen men had seen him drive his camel-back away.

Then Mitcheltree wrote again. He got an immediate reply.

"We can't haul *those* cars," said the railroad company, without hesitation, confirming the engineer's statement, "because they don't comply with the regulations. Get proper cars, and we'll do it. Besides, every car you have badly needs repairs."

"Aha," said Fortescue, "we're getting these chaps. They're getting careless now, and I think I know the reason why."

"What *now*?" asked Mitcheltree.

"Keep your cattle loaded. Feed 'em and water 'em *on the cars*. Write the railroad, wire it, 'phone it, every day. Get answers. But keep your cattle on the cars. Sorry, but they've got to get sick, they've got to die, perhaps, but it can't be helped. We've got to fight this fight."

Weeks passed. "Now," advised Fortescue, "get *real mad*. Don't say a word to the company, but go into Jefferson and hire every lawyer in the place. It won't cost you much to do it. Do it right away."

Two days later the assistant general freight superintendent took in three letters to the general manager of the P. Q. & C.

"This man Mitcheltree is getting ugly," he said.

"Who's Mitcheltree?"

"Biggest cattleman in the State outside of the combine."

"Let's see what he says." He looked over the letters. "Any more lawyers in this?"

The assistant shook his head.

"Beasley, Tamerlane, Levy." He smiled. "I guess," he said softly, to himself, "that we don't *have* to be afraid of Mr. Mitcheltree. These men know *us*. We know *them*. I guess we'll let Mr. Mitcheltree sweat for a while. He's on the ragged edge—at least, so it would seem by this."

A week later this *same* general manager sat, with fiery face and muttering lips, reading a ten-page letter couched in legal terms.

He rushed into his assistant's office and thrust the letter in his face.

"Who's Fortescue?" he queried.

"Fortescue?"

"He's a lawyer down at Donaldson," went on the general manager.

"Didn't know there were any at Donaldson," replied his assistant.

"There seems to be," said the general manager, exhibiting the letter.

"If there is," mused his assistant, "he's a young one. I never heard of him before."

"Um," said the general manager, "if he's a young one, why, there's politics, there's fame, I guess . . ."

Next day Fortescue received a visit from the general manager.

"I thought I'd call about this little matter," said the general manager. "It only needs explanation, and I can satisfy you that we're right and Mr. Mitcheltree is wrong."

He looked Fortescue over carefully, craftily. He could see ambition sticking out of every pore in the young man's body. He was glad of it.

"I shall be glad to hear what you have to say," said Fortescue. He listened carefully, well satisfied that the g.m. was showing his whole hand. The g.m. was, for he was going to win the game by frankness and—something else.

"That's all right," finally said Fortescue when the g.m. stopped, "but, assuming all you say to be true, why didn't you take away the ten cars that Mitcheltree had here on the siding? That is what I never could understand. You may not have had cars yourself, but you had an engine, for the engine came down here."

"True," assented the g.m., "but, you see, *we* had to prepare ourselves, too. *We* sent a number of men down here, and they reported the cars as too big, too light and completely out of repair. *Our* cars are all right. But we can't haul monstrosities, of course."

"Strange," said Fortescue. "Where do you get your cars made?"

"At *our* shops mainly; at Petersen's shops sometimes," returned the manager.

"Strange," mused Fortescue, "but Petersen recently made twenty cars for you, and while he made twenty cars for you, he made ten for us. Strange,

isn't it? And the strange part of it is *that the thirty cars were all alike*. What do you think of that?"

"What?" yelled the g.m. "Petersen never told us about it. How did they get down here?"

"Petersen's own engine fetched them down," said Fortescue. "You see," he explained, "*our* evidence is in very compact form. You're a railroad company; you have wheels within wheels. Petersen failed to report; maybe you never asked him to report; maybe it is none of your business; maybe he was paid to keep his own counsel. I don't know. But *you've* slipped—we haven't."

"We'll haul these ten carloads," said the g.m. finally. He smiled. He had no doubt they had been emptied by this time. "We'll send down for them today."

"All right," responded Fortescue quickly, "they're ready for you on the track."

"Well, we'll send for them," feebly responded the g.m.

Fortescue nodded. "Now," he said, "you've told me what you haven't done, and what you're going to do. You haven't heard what I'm going to do."

He pulled out a bulky document from his desk. "Of course, Mr. General Manager," he went on, "of course, you *know* now, what you didn't know before—that we've got the evidence on which we can break your franchise; the evidence on which we can smash you for violation of the interstate commerce law. You know that. Well, we're going to smash you, now. Tomorrow I'll get an order to show cause . . ."

"From Judge Birdsall?" The g.m.'s lip curled as he said it.

"No," thundered Fortescue, "from Warburton in the northwest corner of the State. *He's* the man for us."

"You can't go into that district," said the g.m. His face flushed. He didn't like Judge Warburton. The railroad's influence was small in the northwest corner of the State.

"Why not?" asked Fortescue.

"It's out of your jurisdiction. You represent Mitcheltree down here."

Fortescue laughed. "Mr. General Manager," he said, "I represent every independent cattleman in the whole State. Put that in your pipe and smoke it."

The manner of the general manager changed in an instant. He still had his trump card to play. His first lead was an appeal for sympathy. He reminded Fortescue that the railroad was bound hand and foot by the big beef combine. He explained to Fortescue that his *own* position was a most trying one. As general manager he had to satisfy everybody. It was a hard job. From that point he launched forth into politics. He assured Fortescue of the wonderful power the P. Q. & C. had in the West. There wasn't anything it couldn't do. It could make men or break them. A man of Mr. Fortescue's intelligence could understand that.

"Now, for instance," he said, "ex-Judge Beasley is going to run for Congress. Now, we don't like Beasley; still, he's favored us, and he will favor us. We've got to favor him. But he's stupid. He's . . ."

"I know he's stupid," ventured Fortescue.

The g.m. wasted no words. "Mr. Fortescue," he said, "what *we* want in Washington is young, *live* men, that's what we want. Say the word, and . . ."

Fortescue smiled. "It's very kind of you," he said, with apparent embarrassment, "and, by the way, I mean to, when . . ."

"When?"

"When I'm through with the P. Q. & C. Watch out."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, Mr. General Manager," said Fortescue, "that I'm a man with a price. But I've got my price from the other side. And besides, I'm going to marry Mitcheltree's daughter, don't you see?"

"The deuce you are!" exclaimed the g.m., aghast.

"Besides," went on Fortescue

blandly, "I—I'm afraid of Mitcheltree—he's an ex-convict, don't you know." He rose and towered above the other man. "Oh, I knew you *knew* it, or I wouldn't have told you. You knew it. You were going to spring it on me. I got there first, that's all." He smiled broadly. "He's been sent up once on a charge of—of murder. If I should go back on him—well, see here, I—I don't want him sent up on another. That's all. . . . Mr. General Manager, I take the eight o'clock train tomorrow morning. If there isn't any train I'll take a motor-car. If there isn't any motor-car, I'll walk. And with me will walk fifteen burly cattlemen, all armed to the teeth."

"What do you want?" queried the general manager.

"I want you to carry independent cattle," answered Fortescue, "for every man in the State from this time forth. I want you to pay damages . . . I'll be mild . . . for two years back . . . I can collect for six."

The g.m. shook his head fiercely. "We won't do either," he said; "go on and fight."

"I want one thing more," said Fortescue. He coughed slightly in the direction of a screen that seemed to stand flat against the wall.

"I want to introduce you to Miss Janet Mitcheltree, the future Mrs. Fortescue. . . . Janet," he said, without turning a hair, "I don't have to introduce you to the general manager. I think by now you know him quite as well as I do myself."

"Do you mean to tell me, you . . ." thundered the g.m., "that you've had a witness here all this time?" He stormed out.

"A witness," cried out Fortescue, after him, "who isn't an ex-convict; whose testimony cannot be impeached, and who will be believed by any judge or jury in the land."

Two days later Fortescue received a letter from the General Superintendent in Chicago, requesting an interview

at the main office of the P. Q. & C. in the Windy City.

"I am in my office," wrote Fortescue, with a grin that could be seen between the lines, "every weekday, from nine till five. If you want to see me, see me there."

They saw him, and they saw him there. They saw him with effect.

"By George," said Stephen Mitchell to him later, "I knew that I was up against a good thing when I tied up to you. By George, we did 'em dirt!"

## VI

### THE MAN WHO MINGLED

It was a dark, damp night. A man stood gazing into the darkness. Had it been day he would have seen nothing but uncompromising gray wall.

"I wonder if they'll try it on tonight," he said softly to himself. As he stood there peering through the barred window something sped swiftly through the air outside, entered the window and squashed against his face.

"By George!" he said. It was a large lump of putty. It had been cast up from someone outside. The man in the dark seized the ball of putty and crushed it open. Within, he found what he was looking for.

"It's early," he whispered to himself, "and the very night for it, too—a good night for almost anything."

There was thunder enough to drown noises. There was lightning enough to aid him and aid him well.

"Gee," he said to himself, "a baby could break out o' this jail. It's rotten to the core."

He worked like a beaver. He had had experience in this sort of thing; he knew how. Suddenly he pulled hard on a bar. There was a snap. The bar had given way at one end. Then he began at the other end. He had his work cut out for him. He was a good-sized man, and he needed a good-sized hole to crawl through.

"I've got *this* thing nailed," he told himself with satisfaction.

After an interval of time the thunder and lightning stopped and the rain ceased. The clouds rolled away and a moon came out. The moon shone into the small room where the man had worked, and it lighted up the whole cell. But if it were looking for the man himself, it looked in vain. The bird had flown.

Suddenly, as the moon looked on, there was the flash of lights, the medley of voices.

In the midst of it all there was the crack of rifles.

At five o'clock that night a crowd of thirteen men had come into town. They were of every kind. They came in by train. They wore beards, some of them; some were getting bald; some looked prosperous; some seemed poor. They were doctors, lawyers, merchants, everything but thieves. Even at that there were one or two who had to 'fess up to belonging to a trust. These men were the best dressed men of the bunch. They walked up the main street in Donaldson.

"Let's find the trust-buster, the railroad-rattler," they cried to one another.

They found him in his office, and they fell on him, almost smashed him.

"Oh, Johnny, Johnny Fortescue," they chanted, for his reputation had percolated into the East, "we didn't know you *could*!"

Fortescue rubbed his eyes. "By George," he exclaimed, "I forgot all about it. Jove! but time flies. It's the annual reunion. How many are there?"

"Thirteen," they responded.

"Saved," cried Fortescue. "I'm the fourteenth man . . . Well, what's the programme for tonight?"

"The same old thing," they said.

It was eight o'clock when the thirteen sallied forth from the United States Hotel, hand on shoulder, with the penal stripes upon them, shouting all the louder because *now* they were men of the world.

"Oh, we are the lads of the Lag,  
Yo ho!

We are the lads of the Lag."

The town sat up as usual. It always did when *this* particular class showed up.

Grand Marshal Charlie Marshall was worried, as usual, and began his usual nine days' dissertation on the subject. But these chaps didn't care. They knew how to have a good time. Year by year the number grew smaller, but there was a nucleus that still held to the old school; still felt the tugging of their *alma mater* at their heart-strings. These few were destined to come and come and . . . come.

"Till we drop in our tracks," they said.

It was after eleven on that moonlight night, when they drew up on Mitcheltree's lawn, their old stamping-ground. The night was fortunately warm, for they were drenched by the generous shower through which they had tramped all evening.

But they didn't like Johnny Fortescue's conduct. Johnny didn't, wouldn't dress up.

"Why not?" they asked.

Johnny knew, well enough. But he only laughed.

"By George," he said, "I'm *home*! I've got a reputation to maintain. You chaps haven't. Not *here*, at any rate."

But they kept Johnny busy. He *had* to be in the game. So they made him follow them in uniform, with a gun, which he was forced to discharge at intervals.

Drenched, they raided Mitcheltree's. Mitcheltree was ready for them; he was always ready. He lit his lights and put his Japanese lanterns out on the lawn and ran his big white light up to the top of the flag-pole.

"A kind of a habit I got into," he explained.

And they sat on the steps, and cavorted about the wet grass, and crooned their little love songs to Janet.

"Most of you married men, too," remarked Mitcheltree. "You're hot ones, you are."

Suddenly a man leaped to his feet. It was old John Ougheltree. "What's that?" he cried sharply.

Stephen Mitcheltree listened. Then he trembled, too.

"It's the guns at the prison," he exclaimed. "Somebody has escaped."

Then there were more guns.

"Oh, joy!" cried Johnny's classmates.

The marshal came running up the street on the bound. The first place he made for was Mitcheltree's.

"You chaps better change your clothes," he said.

"We ref-f-use," they answered, with dignity.

"Well, then," he exclaimed, panting for breath, "for heaven's sake keep together. Don't get scattered and don't leave this place. If you do you're liable to get shot. Take care."

If he had said this on that first night so many months ago when he had lectured them upon their garb, they would have gone up to the prison in a body and taken the risk of getting shot. They would have scattered . . . they would have led the authorities a merry chase of bewilderment, of uncertainty. But the devil in them had died down. Business and domestic life had sobered them.

"But we *won't* change our clothes, Charlie," they told him, "you can depend on that."

"There they go again," cried Mitcheltree once more. He was right. There was a fusillade from the big hill. Then there followed scattering shots, here, there, everywhere.

Somebody on the Mitcheltree veranda seized Johnny's gun and shot it off.

"Don't do that," yelled Mitcheltree, excited as he was, "don't! If a man's got out, I want to see him get back."

"Unnatural father!" they cried, with joyful abandon; "hard-hearted wretch!"

Once later, when the shots had died away and quiet had been restored and they were strolling aimlessly about the grounds, one alumnus caught the other by the arm.

"Did Johnny put on a suit, after all?" he asked.

"No."

"Funny," said the first man, "there are thirteen of us, aren't there?"



"Sure."

"I was sure I counted fourteen just then. Count 'em and see."

The other counted—thirteen.

"Did you count yourself?"

"I don't know whether I did or not," he answered. "I'll count again." They both counted—thirteen.

"Funny," said the first man; "I could have sworn . . . It would have been funny if . . ."

"Wouldn't it?" returned the other, laughing. "If so, Charlie Marshall would have been dead right."

Johnny and Janet had not married yet. Johnny had wanted to become a man, first, in the real sense, and he had wanted to finish with the railroad fight.

"I want to marry when I get through," he told Janet. "I want to get my work done, and then I'll play. . . ."

But Johnny was the right kind of a lover, and Janet was the right kind of a girl. They knew how to make love; and they didn't make it, these Summer nights, out on the broad piazza in the front. They had a little back porch of their own, where there was just room for two, and a ray or so of moonlight, when there was a moon. And when there wasn't—well, they had to get along without it, then. There was nothing else to do.

Johnny went off with the boys that night. He had to, to please them. They didn't stand for any spooning when they were around, and they didn't intend to let Johnny be a spoon when they weren't around. They carried him off, bodily.

But Janet knew he would come back. She waited downstairs in the little den and read awhile. Then she heard a rustle on the little back porch, and she gave a glad little cry.

"Johnny," she whispered. She stepped out. The little porch was fairly well lit. The moonlight streamed down upon it from without, and the den light from within.

Suddenly she gave a little cry. It was another cry—of pleasure; for she had forgotten Johnny's garb of that

night. The multitude had confused her.

And she thought that *that* was Johnny, crouching there—there in the dark corner, the man in prison garb.

"Hello, Johnny boy," she said softly. "Hello, lad o' the lag."

She stopped. For the man rose, still crouching, and half-faced her. It wasn't Johnny. *Who* was it—*what* was it?

The man was silent and so was she. But *her* face was bathed in the light from the den within. The man looked upon her for an instant, then he crouched still farther into his corner.

"It's *you* . . . you!" he cried, never for an instant taking his eyes from her face. "*You!*" His teeth chattered. "What did *you* come back for . . . what . . . ar-r-g-g-gh!"

His hoarse cry was a cry of fear—fear that possessed him body and soul—fear of her. Janet did not stop to reason it all out. But she, too, was held in the grip of terror. For at last she saw the man's face. Crouch as he would, his face stood out in the green moonlight. It was a bold face; it had bold eyes, and yet, it was ghastly—the face of a man who saw Something that chilled his very soul.

"*You* leave me alone, Janet," he said stiffly, his teeth chattering terribly again as he mentioned her name.

"*Oh-h-h-h!*" Janet's voice, in her agony of fear, had come back to her. She screamed with the shrill tones of a woman whose very bones were frozen with fear. "Oh, Johnny!"

At that very instant a man in plain clothes ran up the driveway, dashed up the steps and caught the girl in his arms. It was Johnny Fortescue.

"There, there!" she cried to Johnny. "Look! . . ."

Johnny looked. Then he leaped for the man, and caught him. The man immediately regained his composure. *This* was real, at any rate. He was built for a fight, was this man from the cell. He knew *how*.

"You let me go," he whispered in Johnny's ear, "or I'll . . ."

Whatever his threat was, he had the strength to make it good.

Johnny felt that . . . he knew that the other man had the advantage. He uttered a hoarse cry for help.

His cry was superfluous, for Stephen Mitcheltree had heard Janet's first call. And Stephen Mitcheltree, with all his weight and his agility, was upon them. He crushed down the fighting men like a thousand of brick. Suddenly he stopped.

"Get out, Johnny," he said, "I've got him. I can take care of him myself."

Johnny crawled out, pretty well done up. He hadn't fought for the thing that the other man had been fighting for—freedom. His assailant had been desperate. As it was, the stranger was not yet finished. Silently, the two big men fought. Joints cracked, profanity and vituperation flowed in a gentle stream.

"Ho, ho," cried Mitcheltree at last.

His man was down and out. "Now we'll see," said Stephen Mitcheltree.

He dragged the vanquished into the den, and let the full light from the lamp shine upon his face.

"I thought so," he exclaimed softly to himself. "It's Challoner. *At last!*"

They bound him silently, hand and foot, Mitcheltree and Fortescue. Then they dashed some water on his face and revived him.

"Johnny," said Stephen Mitcheltree, turning to Fortescue, "go downtown to your father and tell him to come up here at once. Tell him I've got Challoner. *He'll come.*"

"Wait, Johnny," he cried after him. "Don't tell anybody else."

Johnny went. Mitcheltree stood there looking down at his prisoner. "Well, Challoner," he said, "you got out this time, didn't you? I suppose you thought you'd get away for sure. I guess, friend," he went on, "that you've come to the wrong shop this time."

Challoner said nothing. He sat in the chair where they had bound him, sullen and unresponsive.

Suddenly he spoke. "Will you take that girl away?" he cried.

Mitcheltree clutched Janet by the arm. "Brace up, girlie," he said, and there was a new, sharp click in his throat. "No, I won't," he answered Challoner.

Fortescue and his father came back. John Ougheltree stepped in and nodded to Challoner with the matter-of-fact air of a man who had been accustomed to see Challoner every day for a long while.

"Johnny," whispered Mitcheltree, "there's something I want to say to you and your dad. Meantime I want Janet to stay in there. I've got a reason." He leaned over and whispered to Janet and thrust a pistol into her hand.

"Girl," he said, "it's all for the best. There's a reason—a real one. . . . Are you afraid?"

"No," she answered firmly.

She seated herself in the window, and they turned out the light. There was nothing but the moonlight streaming in upon the girl's face. The three men stepped into the next room.

"Take the girl away," hoarsely cried the prisoner. There was no response.

"Take her away!" he cried. Janet was afraid, but the only thing she feared was the uncanny fear of the man himself. But she held her ground, and the glint of the moon upon the pistol showed that her hand was steady. She was playing a part; it mattered not to her that it was a part that she could not understand.

The three men in the next room whispered together. "You ought to give him up *at once*," counseled Johnny Fortescue. "You don't want to get into trouble with the authorities. He may escape again."

Mitcheltree laughed a hoarse laugh. "John Ougheltree," he whispered in the darkness, "do you think he'll ever escape from *us*?"

Then Mitcheltree turned to Fortescue. "There's something I want to get from him before I give him up—something I want to know. That something," he added, "*is the truth.*"

They took Challoner up to a large

attic room at the top of the house. Two men sat there with him, with pistols in their hands. They were silent, grim. They let him do the talking.

He talked, to keep some horror from him. "Lies, all lies," thought Stephen Mitcheltree.

But all that day, below, in the Mitcheltree household, great preparations were being made. There was to be a banquet; few knew just in whose honor it was to be given.

From the United States Hotel a man came up with a huge case of champagne, a large box of cigars.

Stephen Mitcheltree leaned over toward John Ougheltree. "I'm going to give him a *taste* of freedom," he said grimly, "*then* he can go back."

"For the rest of his life," assented Ougheltree, smacking his lips.

They had stripped Challoner of his stripes and had clothed him in plain garments. And now, one by one, the viands made their appearance. They were placed upon a big rough table in the centre of the room. As darkness fell, a big lantern was lit in the peak of the roof—the white light that had signaled John Ougheltree every night.

They loosed Challoner's hands. "We're going to give you a feast, Challoner," they told him.

"Then—what?" asked Challoner, for the fear was upon him.

"We'll give you up," they said.

Challoner nodded. "You'll kill me when I'm drunk," he cried.

"We won't kill you at all," said Mitcheltree, "and we won't do anything to you when you're drunk. Tonight we eat, drink and be merry."

For the first time Challoner smiled—a hard smile, but one of relief, too.

"I'm game," he said, "and hungry as a bear. If we're goin' to feed, why, open up a bottle, John. I'm near dead for a good drink. I ain't had a drink in years."

He drank three glasses. And as he drank the fire came back into his face. He was handsome in a bold way. With a good mustache to hide the ugliness of his mouth, he would have been remarkably good-looking.

"Gee, but this is all-fired good living," he said finally.

The other two men ate little, drank little. They were there for a purpose. They knew Challoner, and they knew that he told the truth only *when drunk*. And there was one thing that Stephen Mitcheltree wanted to know.

They plied him with wine. He was bewildered by it at the start. But slowly, his old strength of head made itself apparent, and he was the dare-devil once more that he used to be.

"Who cares for tomorrow?" he cried out. "Tonight is the night."

It was late when Stephen Mitcheltree thrust his face suddenly into the face of Challoner.

"You could have got us off, Challoner," he said. "Why didn't you do it?"

Challoner was startled. He brushed his hand across his eyes, and tried to rise to his feet. Then he stumbled back into his chair.

"Let's all have another drink, Steve," he said. He took a full bottle and poured it out. Half of it went on the table, dripping down upon the floor. Stephen Mitcheltree knew that sign . . . his guest was drunk now, beyond all compromise.

Challoner leaned over, drinking his wine at a gulp as he did so.

"There are things you don't know about, you two," he said; "you know about what happened afterwards, but not before. You don't know it all, you don't. . . ."

They leaned back carelessly in their chairs and let him talk. Gradually, deftly, Stephen Mitcheltree drew the lines tighter and tighter. Challoner rambled on.

Suddenly, as though by signal, a slender shadow stole into the room. As it stole around behind Challoner, Stephen Mitcheltree leaned over and held his attention.

"That's what I'm interested in," he said, "that's what I want to know."

At that instant Challoner lifted up his head. Peering down at him over his shoulder was . . . *a face*.

He rose with a shriek. "She was

good," he yelled, almost beside himself with fear, "she was good . . . she was too damned good. She was your wife, Steve. She stuck to you. If she hadn't been good we wouldn't any of us have been . . . If she hadn't been good it wouldn't have happened. . . . Why, look at her, . . . look at her. Can't you see she's good? Look. . . ."

He pointed into space. He shivered and fell, into a heap, into his chair. "Where has she gone?" he whimpered.

Stephen Mitcheltree nodded to John Ougheltree. "It's what I knew before," he said. "It fits in with everything I know. But," he added, "I wanted to hear it from his own lips. I've heard. It's true. I know Challoner when he tells the truth. He's told the truth tonight."

"He told the truth," assented Ougheltree.

Next day, when they gave Challoner up to the authorities, he fought like a wild beast. He had tasted freedom . . . the kind of wild freedom that he liked. It had come upon him suddenly . . . joyously.

"It'll be a double hell for him up there now . . . for life," said Stephen Mitcheltree.

## VII

### THE SKELETON STALKS FORTH

"JANET and Johnny," Stephen Mitcheltree said to them, as they sat tremulously side by side—for *their* day had come at last, "there are things that must be said, things cleared up, things done. We're going to do 'em, old John Ougheltree and me. We're going to tell you the worst. We're going to do the best for you."

"The best?" queried Fortescue. "What might *that* be?"

"You'll see," said Mitcheltree, nodding his head toward old Ougheltree. Then he fell into that steady stride of his, and talked as he walked.

"You wouldn't think," he said, "to hear us talk, and to look at us, that

John Ougheltree and me belonged to some o' the best families across the border of the State. But we did. There wasn't aught the matter with us, but we were wild, we were cronies, we were wild together. It was the drink, mostly—and such. I'm not going to talk about it much, for we've thrashed it all out in our souls. It's enough to say that if I hadn't been wild, it never would have happened; and if Johnny hadn't been my friend, *his* trouble wouldn't have happened. I married your mother, Janet, when I was at my wildest. She was the best there was. Family—I won't tell you who they are, for they always hated me like poison and I hated them. They wanted Challoner to marry her. They never knew till it was too late what kind Challoner was. . . . The

one thing that's worried me, the one thing that I've carried with me and will always carry with me, is that crime of neglect that a man is guilty of when he's wild and has a wife. I didn't, couldn't see. . . . Then *you* were born, girl, and I wasn't any better. John and I painted things lurid, when we could. John and I, we *killed* our wives, both of us. We didn't mean to—we didn't do it direct, but we set the wheels in motion, just because we never thought. And my Janet went crazy. I don't mean crazy in the real sense; I mean that she didn't know which way to turn—what to do. And her people whisperin' in her ear to get a divorce and throw me over. . . . Challoner was waiting. She didn't listen. I know she didn't. If she had, she wouldn't have gone. But one night, after I hadn't come home for . . . I don't know how long, girlie, my Janet *did* go crazy, for a time. She left you with my sister, girlie, and she left—with Challoner. Challoner had *his* plans laid, too. He was no fool. But, before she'd got half-way, her senses came back. She woke up, so to speak. She began to understand that it wasn't her who was running away, but the craze within her. . . . My Janet, she was a beauty, girl. . . . She was good as she

was pretty. And she stopped before it was too late. She stopped just as they set foot over the threshold of the little inn on the mountain.

"'I'm going back,' she said to Challoner. I knew it all along. I knew it when I was tried. I never doubted it. But I got it straight from Challoner last month. *He* told me what I knew already, but what I've been waitin' to hear from him. Years I've waited. I've seen him day after day, John has seen him day after day, without a word or whisper, but I waited to some purpose.

"'I'm going back,' she said to Challoner. . . . Nobody knows then just what happened but Challoner and she. Challoner was a man to have his way. He was not to be fooled. . . . He had run away with Janet, and he was seein' to it that Janet would run away with him. Well, two terrible forces clashed there. Janet was good; she stopped before it was too late. And Challoner *had* to be reckoned with—a man with a temper, passion. . . . You saw him the day they took him back. . . .

"*Challoner killed her.* And all that I knew, back home, was that I had come in and she had gone out. And I made inquiries and—somehow, because I wasn't in my right mind, *I guessed.* And I followed, and John followed with me. John beat it better than I could, and when I came up, for we *had* struck the right trail, I found John wrestling with a blood-spattered wild beast. *That* was Challoner. And there was Janet. They had walked back toward home; she was bound home, when the beast that was in Challoner flashed out. He struck her once—that's all. . . . They found John Ougheltree and Challoner there and took 'em both. They found me, tumbled in a stupor, down the road.

"It was a case o' murder, and Challoner had done it. *Her* people were like wild beasts. There was things to be said against me, and there was the evidence against Ougheltree and Challoner. It was a tangle people couldn't unravel. Challoner never said a word.

But the evidence was against him, all along. Her folks may not have the right of it today. *I* don't care. But you couldn't fool that court and jury on the evidence. Challoner had been seen with her, alone. The deepest stains were on *him*. He claimed to have defended her from John. He did pretty well on that, too. There was doubts. But they couldn't ring in any motive on John. John was my friend, but there was nothin' outside to connect him with the case. Still, *her* folks pulled strong against John, because he *was* my friend, and the jury tried to pull strong against Challoner. There were things said that I ain't going to repeat; there were theories.

"Well, they jumped on *me*, too, almost without evidence. What did I care? I was ready to go down to my death for the part I played. I *needed* five years in prison to get my senses back. I took what they give me; John took what they give him. . . . John had *never* had anything to do with it—he was out of it. They dragged him in for twenty-five good years. And Challoner—well, the jury guessed right; but the judge, he gave him a bit of the benefit of a doubt. It was life for Challoner. That's why he's tried to get out. They can't make him serve a longer term even if they catch him. He'll get out again—mark that. He'll feel the good time he had here last month. He'll get out. They'll get him back. *I* know. . . . It'll be worse outside than it is in—afraid o' every trembling leaf, wakin' up at night with terror drippin' from his face. . . . What do I care? Let him go. *He* told me what I knew already, that Janet never meant . . . that she came back before it was too late. . . .

"It's a hard story, girl," he went on gently, for Janet was shrinking against Johnny Fortescue in her agitation. "It's a hard story, and yet it seemed simple and easy at the time. We weren't so bad, John and me . . . it was carelessness more than anything else. We had good intentions, but I guess that they're the kind that hell is

paved with. . . . But there was *one* thing . . . I held off Janet's people from my baby. I was goin' to be a man some day and I wanted to grow up with her. It was selfish, maybe, maybe . . ."

"It was *not!*" cried Janet. She sprang across and clung to her father and kissed him. The terror was over for her.

"I know," he said tremulously, "and it has made a man of me, girl. . . . I sent my sister over here. They never knew. They never found out. . . . Maybe, after all, they didn't care. My sister, *she* was good; sometimes I think it killed *her*, but she kept up until I got out, and I . . . We've grown up together, my little girl, and me. . . ."

"And John's come out. John's wife stuck to him."

"Never mind about her," cried old Ougheltree huskily. And Fortescue winced.

"I'm telling the story, John," returned Stephen Mitcheltree firmly. "It's a ghastly one, but they've got to know it. It was the shame, the taint, that killed her. But *her* family dragged her away. We only know where *she* stood, John and I, for she named her last boy *John*. . . . It's an ugly story, boy and girl, ugly. It's terrible. If it hadn't been for Challoner it wouldn't have happened. If it hadn't been for *her* folks it wouldn't have happened. But it wouldn't *ever* have happened if it hadn't been for me. We've thrashed it out in our *souls*, John and I; we've thrashed it out alone and together. It's awful, but we had to tell it to you, for it's God's own truth."

There was a long silence. The horror of the thing was upon them all. But Stephen Mitcheltree roused himself at last.

"There's a sequel to it," he said, "and John and I have made up our minds together. There's no taint on you; it makes no difference what your fathers have done, there's no taint on you. But, I've made money, and we're making money, John and I. You're going to get married today, you

two. . . ." He stopped. His voice broke for an instant and something clicked in his throat.

"We're going to give you half of all we've got. *We want you to go and never to come back.* We want you to be free o' the taint o' the lag."

He sat down. Johnny Fortescue rose. "It's my turn now," he said. "We're going . . ."

"Good!"

"Going," repeated he, "to *stay*, Janet and I. If you hadn't told us, we might have gone. As it is, we want to stay. We can't go away. We won't. We don't want to. We're going to stay and make you remember the kind of men you've been for a quarter of a century; make you forget the kind of men you were before. Besides," he added, "we've got the P. Q. & C. still to fight, and I've got to fight them."

"We beat 'em."

"In *one* fight, yes," returned the counselor-at-law, "but they'll come back at us again. Fighting the P. Q. & C. is the task of a lifetime—of *my* lifetime. I won't run away, I'm going to stay right here and lick the boots off of them. But that isn't all." He laughed. "You said you'd give us half of what you had, you two. Well, we've got to stay right here. If we don't there may never be a chance. . . ."

"Of what?" asked Mitcheltree.

"Of ever getting the *other* half," laughed Fortescue.

There was a knock on the door. John Fortescue stepped to it and opened it. He flushed slightly. Then he came back and caught Janet gently by the arm and drew her with him.

They went into the next room, and stood in the middle of the floor, side by side, tremulous with sudden, overpowering emotion. A man with a long black coat stood before them, with an open book in his hand. He took their hands and joined them. Then he began to read. . . .

Fortescue waited until he heard Janet's tremulous, "Yes."

He put his arm around her and held



her tight. The man in the long black coat lifted up his hands above them.

The man in the long black coat was the pastor of the Donaldson First Church. And with the lifting of his hands the shadow of the taint was lifted from the two before him. Fear

left the eyes of Janet Fortescue forever. Some new thing took its place—something that was meant for young John Fortescue alone.

"Johnny—boy," she whispered to him.

"Janet—girl," he cried aloud, for all the world to hear.



## LOVE'S IMMORTALITY

By Arthur Upson

**M**ETHOUGHT I saw what lovers time has known;  
     Not Helen with the earth-flame in her eyes,  
     Neither Francesca with her stifled moan,  
     Nor any like to these, but otherwise:

Quiet, unluted lovers all obscure,  
     Sweet as with garden-fragrance and fresh dew,  
 Whose passions were both prosperous and pure,  
     Whose lives were all their loveliest dreams made true.

They crouched not low, bewailing mournful chance,  
     But seemed strong souls beneath the day's white star,  
 Revealed a moment in my breathless trance,  
     Erect and fair as the immortals are;

Youths and dear girls unknown to minstrels' page,  
     Husbands and wives forgotten in the earth,  
 Old men and women smiling through their age—  
     All steadfast spirits since true-love had birth.

They moved before mine eyes a little time,  
     Then vanished—oh, imperishable dream!  
 I saw beyond the cloud, I heard Love's rime  
     Under the loud, swift current of Life's stream;

I saw the world upheld by Lovers' hands,  
     I felt a silence sweet as music's soul—  
 For Love's immortals, like angelic bands,  
     Held all the earth in one divine control!

# LE PIRATE ET L'EMPLOYÉ

Par J.-H. Rosny

**P**IERRE DEMEUR travaillait depuis trois ans dans les bureaux du banquier Malitourne. Quoique Malitourne pût à peine articuler une parole qui ne valût un petit sac d'or, il payait mal ses employés. Par principe. Il prétendait que les employés faméliques sont les meilleurs.

— L'employé, disait-il, est, par définition et par destination, un animal de bât et de joug. L'abondance lui donne des idées et des espérances... Pour qu'il traîne convenablement sa charge, il faut qu'il ait tout juste sa pitance...

Il ajoutait:

— D'ailleurs, la pénurie des appointements est un moyen de sélection. Ceux qui ne sont pas vraiment des employés filent et font ainsi place nette. L'employé de carrière reste planté là où le sort l'a fixé... le manque d'initiative étant le fond même de sa nature. Dans mes bureaux, il n'y a que des employés et je m'en trouve bien. Quant aux deux ou trois hommes de main utiles à un loup-cervier de mon espèce, je les niche à part dans un petit appartement à portée.

Chose étrange, il aimait ces employés lamentables... Il venait les voir souvent, il dardait sur eux ses yeux jaunes, il leur donnait de bons médecins en cas de maladie et nourrissait leurs convalescences de consommés, de poulets de grain et de primeurs. De plus, il leur faisait, dans leur vieillesse, une pension égale à leur traitement:

— Car, remarquait-il, la retraite est l'âme même du rond de cuir...

Il est certain que cette retraite hypnotisait les pauvres diables, au point qu'ils avaient une véritable affection pour le vieux reître. Et ceux qui en

jouissaient venaient, pour le plaisir, gratouiller un peu de papier, ou se livrer aux délices de l'addition et du collationnement, avec l'approbation du banquier. C'étaient des symboles, des mânes heureux, dont la vue chauffait le cœur des autres et leur versait le vin généreux de l'enthousiasme.

Un événement vint encore aviver les bons sentiments des bureaucrates. Malitourne perdit son secrétaire, un homme sur le retour, qui servait depuis un quart de siècle. Il passa dans les bureaux et se mit à scruter les rangs du personnel. Il s'arrêta devant Pierre Demeur, qui était en train de boucler un compte. Pierre était tout jeune encore, des yeux aussi naïfs que les yeux d'un chien, d'ailleurs fort plaisants, un visage à qui l'air des bureaux n'avait pu dérober une fraîcheur de camélia, un sourire où la joie de vivre étincelait comme une rivière à l'avrillée.

— Qu'est-ce que vous gagnez, vous? cria brusquement Malitourne.

— Quinze cents francs par an, répondit Pierre... et la gratification.

— Êtes-vous heureux?

— Je ne suis pas malheureux! riposta gaiement l'esclave.

Malitourne se mit à rire:

— Bravo! une vraie âme d'employé. Ah! mon garçon, quelle veine! Ce n'est pas tous les jours drôle d'être un animal sauvage... un fauve! Il faut sauter, bondir, égorger les autres et éviter les griffes... Le ciel, c'est ici! Bonne chaise, bon pupitre, bonne encre, bon papier, bon grattoir... et la retraite, la sainte retraite! En attendant, mon gosse, va falloir déguerpir d'ici. J'ai perdu ma bonne vieille bête de secrétaire, il faut le remplacer. Il y a deux

ans que je vous guigne, je vous connais, vous m'irez comme un gant. A partir d'aujourd'hui, vous êtes mon secrétaire, aux appointements sublimes de cent cinquante francs par mois. Hop!

De même qu'il avait été un employé parfait, Pierre fut un secrétaire idéal. Idéal selon l'évangile de Malitourne. Il écrivait sous dictée, retenait exactement les notes à prendre, allait porter des ordres à la Bourse, s'abstenait de la plus minime initiative, était aussi discret que le sépulcre. Et parfois, Malitourne lui disait:

— Sans doute, j'étais content de mon vieux Cahuchet... Oui, c'était une bonne machine, bien graissée, bien régulière, bien silencieuse, mais vous le dépassez autant qu'un train de chemin de fer dépasse une diligence. Ah! mon petit, c'est divin, une telle absence de spontanéité, une telle aptitude à ne rien faire par soi-même, une telle docilité au mors, c'est angélique. Et ce bonheur, ce délicieux bonheur de créature irresponsable!

Malitourne introduisait Pierre au sein de sa famille. Il s'installait avec les siens dans de larges fauteuils et faisait mettre Demeur sur un petit tabouret. Souvent, on déjeunait devant le secrétaire, sans jamais l'inviter à partager le repas. Mais au dessert, Malitourne lui faisait passer un reste de vin, une pâtisserie dédaignée, un fruit blet, et admirait le plaisir que prenait le jeune homme à s'enfourner ces friandises.

Il y avait là Mme Malitourne, quatre-vingt-dix kilos de gélatine tremblante, dans des étoffes éblouissantes: cramoisie, soufre, gorge de canard, aile de paon, M. Zéphirin Malitourne, qui commençait à terrifier le marché des huiles, des céréales, des sucres et des alcools, or il razziait comme un grand chef de Boucaniers, et Mlle Paulette Malitourne, qui jetait au sein de sa famille une note discordante de jeune rose au milieu de cactus, d'aloès et d'euphorbes. Elle était à ce tournant des races où les traits de la conquête se muent en séduction. Une poudre de nacre, une trame de jasmin et de convolvulus

couvraient sa chair fraîche. Un subtil électricien avait calculé l'éclat de ses prunelles, et l'avait apparié à des nuances flottant de la lazulite à l'émeraude foncée. Elle avait reçu en abondance l'herbe odoriférante des cheveux; et ses mouvements répondaient exactement à la structure heureuse de son corps. Elle seule traitait Pierre d'égal à égal; le jeune employé la regardait, de très bas et de très loin, comme un humble esclave de Chypre aurait pu regarder, sur la mer retentissante, le reflet sacré de l'Anadyomène.

Or, un matin, Malitourne ayant fini de dicter ses lettres, dit à son secrétaire:

— Mon gosse, je deviens vieux. Il est temps que je prenne des arrangements définitifs pour m'assurer l'entourage qui convient aux hommes qui déclinent. Ma femme n'est pas une mauvaise créature; elle est même bougrement meilleure que moi qui, par destination, ai été créé pour démolir le prochain et m'en suis admirablement acquitté. Zéphirin est une crapule de mon espèce. Il fera son chemin, et ça ne sera pas long. Quant à ma fille, ben, c'est extraordinaire, mais c'est une petite herbivore, pas le moindre instinct destructif; c'est doux, c'est frais, c'est tendre, en somme, ce qu'il me faudrait quand j'aurai fini de faire la guerre. Seulement, je lui veux un bon mari, une tourte, honnête, aimante, optimiste, quelque chose comme vous!

Malitourne cassa deux ou trois plumes et enfonça un canif dans la table, puis il reprit:

— Comme vous, oui! Mais des tourtes de votre espèce, c'est plus rare que des hommes de génie. Il y a sept ans que je cherche la pareille parmi les gens qui ont de la galette, j'en ai pas trouvé une seule. Comme Paulette va avoir vingt et un ans, je ne puis plus attendre. Ca m'embête! Il faut en finir. Alors, quoi! elle n'a déjà pas tant besoin d'argent, elle aura trois ou quatre millions de dot. Avec ça, on peut vivre deux et faire de la marmaille. Prenons donc notre élan: c'est vous qui épouserez ma fille!

Le secrétaire qui écoutait, debout, fut si surpris que les jarrets lui faillirent; il tomba sur ses genoux:

— Moi! cria-t-il, hagard.

— Oui, vous, espèce de mollusque! Est-ce que vous auriez l'aplomb de ne pas être content?

Pierre tourna un visage extasié vers son patron, qui se mit à rire:

— Parbleu!

— Mais jamais Mlle Paulette ne voudra de moi! murmura Demeur d'une voix haletante. Vous croyez ça!...

Il sonna, donna un ordre. On entendit un voluptueux bruit de robes, et Malitourne ronchonnait:

— Paulette, si je te donne cette moule pour mari, est-ce que tu l'accepteras?

La jeune fille poussa un cri de joie, tandis que Malitourne la jetait vivement dans les bras de l'employé, en beuglant:

— Tu n'es pas dégoûtée! Une vraie âme d'employé, une dupe, une poire, tout ce qu'il y a de bon, tout ce qu'il y a d'exquis au monde, la source du dévouement, de la générosité et de l'héroïsme... Ah! nom d'un chien, tu en auras de l'amour, et, pour ton vieux pirate de père, quelle délicieuse fin d'existence!



## THE MENACE

By Elsa Barker

WHEN I remember, Love, that but for thee  
 My homeless spirit still would wander lone,  
 Alien in this inhospitable zone  
 Upon the globe of Time; when rapturously  
 I touch the gleaming jewel of unity—  
 Whose dual rays are thy soul and my own—  
 Then do I tremble lest the masked unknown  
 Brigand of Death snatch thee away from me.

All other perils we can brave together,  
 Challenging them to part us. But beyond  
 The shifting boundaries of the realm of breath  
 Are many dangers and uncertain weather.  
 Nothing can rend our Nature-woven bond  
 Save the inexorable caprice of Death.



A MAN may have a heart big enough to love two women at one time, but he ought to have more head.

# THE CALL OF THE RED GODS

By H. A. Auer

FOR weeks the Red Gods, those spirits that inhabit the mountains and dwell in the rapids and falls of the wilderness, whose presence is all unknown to most men, but who are none the less real to the Ojibways of the North and to the few white men, strong sons of Nature, who have been in the Indian Councils, had been calling through the silence with that quiet insistence which compels response; and, at last, after a week of travel by land and water, the Man had beached his birch canoe at the river's edge and stood in the midst of the lodges of his Red Brothers.

Yet, as he gazed in quiet thought toward the wigwams of the Ojibways, they were not at all in his vision, for he was deep in council with a fair face far away from the dwellings of the nature people and far back in the world of artificial people and things. For years had the uneven course of his life flowed restlessly and alone through zones of storm and shadow among the shallows of petty conventions and between the banks of artificial society, until its troubled course had come to a clear, crystal pool, where seemed to be continual sunshine and peace and quietude. On the bank was found the Girl, quiet, beautiful and deep, herself the spirit and genius of the crystal water which reflected her.

Here the Man had tarried many months lost in wonderment and dreams of happiness, yet distracted by doubt whether the restless current of his life would remain in the haven of rest, or whether, by habit of motion, it would again sweep out into the leaping rapids below and continue its lonely course

until lost in the depths of the eternal sea. Here it was that the Red Gods had begun to call to him, and he, listening to their distant voices and remembering their willingness to help him in his past perplexities and hoping for their aid in banishing the distracting doubts and fears that tugged at his happiness, had responded to their calling.

Turning from the silent contemplation of the features of his vision, he slowly picked his way among the packs of snapping sledge-dogs toward the largest of the lodges, from which an Indian of fine, dignified appearance, past the zenith of his life, short, but of powerful build, issued and came slowly forward. "*Bou jou! Bou jou!*" were the only words of greeting that passed between Chief Kash and his visitor, as both gazed steadily into each other's eyes, each silently searching the other and quietly taking stock of the man behind the mask; for, in the North Country, men think and act more than they talk, and the silence of Nature has induced a silence of communication between her children quite as real and far more penetrating than the use of tongues, and far less deceiving.

Thus the two men took each other's measure. They were clad nearly alike: weather-beaten, broad, felt hats, gray flannel shirts, short wool trousers to the knee, and low, oil-tanned shoepacs. But while the Indian retained the buckskin leggings, his visitor wore only thick woolen golf stockings. While the Man towering head above the Chief was making note of his finely chiseled classic features, his straight, thin lips, his steady, unwavering eyes

and his broad, erect shoulders, the Chief was marking the deep clear eyes of his visitor, the broad high forehead, the sensitive lips and the full chin terminating a heavy, determined jaw; it was the face of a man of thirty, a dreamer and an idealist, with the determination and force of a man of action created for a life of conflict and striving.

The inspection suddenly ended by the Chief again uttering the greeting, "*Bou jou!*" and with the words he offered his hand. He then led the way to the Council Lodge. Here the two sat opposite each other in silence while their pipes of tobacco lasted, the Indian waiting for the Man to speak his mission. At length he began in the simple tongue of the Ojibways:

"Chief Kash, the White Brother has heard the calling of the Red Gods, and has come many days' journey from beyond the land of the red deer and the birch and the maples and oak to the land of the caribou, where only the spruce, the pine and the hemlock lift their heads. The Red Gods have a word that they would speak to the White Brother, and he has come to hear their voice. Will you go with him into the Land of Silence, where, in the rush of the rapids or in the stillness of the forest, the Great Mitchie Manito can speak the word which is in his heart?"

For a time the old Chief sat lost in thought, gazing steadily at the speaker without moving a muscle. Then his voice broke upon the silence of the council:

"The White Brother is wise; he has heard the voices of the Red Gods who have loved him, else they had never called; he has traveled far beyond the rising sun and the wigwams of his people. I with my son Waugush, the Fox, will go with the White Brother far into the forest, where the white man's moccasin has never trod, that he may find the word which the Great Spirit would speak to him. When the sun first shows his face above the pines we will start."

Together they left the Council Lodge

and crossed to the Chief's wigwam, where his wife, sitting upon a deerskin sewing moccasins, welcomed the stranger with a smile, while the timid Indian children, unused to the white face, crowded close to their mother in wonderment, but also in fear, which the Man at once observed.

Nowhere in his life had his face occasioned fear, and his mind instinctively rebelled at the thoughts so plainly written upon the faces of the Nature children; so, speaking softly in the native Ojibway, he coaxed the smallest of the children from its mother and folded it in his own strong arms. The touch of the warm, tender little bundle of humanity sent its thrill of joy through the strong frame of the Man, and his lonely heart was warmed until his face glowed, as the wide-open eyes of wonder in the little forest creature contentedly closed with trust and confidence. At once the caution and reserve of the little Nature people had vanished; they came to the Man in undisguised friendliness; one slender boy of thirteen Summers proudly brought forth, in leash, an unusually large and vicious-looking huskie resembling a black timber wolf more than a dog, and led him three times before the Man, who regarded him with approval and with full understanding of the boy's manifestation of friendliness and the animal's good points as a leader of the sledge team, for he was a keen and exact observer of the horse and the dog, and he knew the fine points of both.

Thus a pleasant hour passed in establishing relations with the Indian family, when, from the forest, gliding rather than walking to his father's lodge, came the Chief's son, the Fox; the Chief spoke the word which caused the son to extend both his hands to the stranger in the friendliness of greeting. It was a striking picture before the wigwam outlined against the deep green of the forest. The White Man and the Red seemed like statues cast in the same mold, but in metals of different color; their eyes met at the same level, both were as lithe and powerful as full-



grown panthers and both had the same deep, penetrating gaze; the lips of the Indian were finer and his features sharper, but the brow of the Man was higher and broader, and his heavy jaw and chin more noticeable. Yet, to have seen the two together, one could not doubt that the Great Spirit had made them both, and made them well.

After the evening meal which the Chief's wife set before him, when the sun had left the tree-tops and the chill of night had begun to fall, the Man, declining the offer of a near-by wigwam and carrying his pack of blankets, departed into the forest for the night. His artificial life had been left behind a week before at the frontier and his needs were only the simple ones of the woodsman; but a few minutes were spent in cutting the balsam boughs for a bed upon which to spread his blankets under the open sky, for the strong children of Nature need no canopy to interpose itself between their slumbers and the heavens. Then he made a council fire which banished the inky blackness of the forest for a circle of twenty feet and, sitting cross-legged upon the ground after the fashion of the Ojibways, he smoked far into the night.

No word came from his lips, yet in his council many voices silently strove for mastery; across his fire-lit features would leap the figures of Joy and Hope, to be followed by those of Doubt and Gloom; for a time he sat thus smoking in nervous haste as if fearful that his pipe would go out, with the restless shadows of his thoughts chasing each other across his face, always ending in Doubt. At length the fire burned lower and the circle of light diminished as the Man gazed long and earnestly into the glowing coals; it was the vision of the Girl with whom he was holding council, pure and beautiful, with a wonderful human sympathy and understanding written upon her face. Could it be that his life of eternal unrest would find contentment in the deep and quiet waters of her Spirit? Could it be that he would not miss the madness and the dash of the rapids in the

quiet of the still waters? Might it not be that his restlessness, instead of being calmed and soothed, would forever destroy the peace of the pool? These were the questions which the vision insistently asked of him, and which troubled even his dreams; and these were the questions which had brought him to the Red Gods for their aid in answering.

Darkness still ruled the forest, when from beside the Man rose the figure of the Chief's son; all unknown he had shared the solitude with the stranger whose shoulder he now touched as the time for sunrise was rapidly approaching. Quickly the Indian prepared the breakfast while his companion strapped his pack; and, as the sun showed the first red ray above the forest, the two men met the Chief at the river's bank; the flour and bacon and pork and tea were stowed in the fourteen-foot birch canoe; the packs were placed conveniently to kneel or sit upon and the canoe swung into the stream. September in the North Country has a decided chill, no matter how bright the sunshine; the morning air is so penetrating as to leave no doubt but that Summer has entirely fled, and Winter treads close upon her heels. But Nature gives one a thrill and an impulse for action and striving, and once into the stream the three paddles clicked in rapid and perfect rhythm as the canoe was forced against the current. The Man gloried in the rapid work with the paddle and seemed to take great delight in giving vent to his restlessness by fierce and rapid digs into the water.

For ten miles they paddled until the current became so swift that the paddles had to give place to the poles. The Man knelt in the bow, the Chief's son poled from the stern, while Kash was compelled to sit inactive in the centre. For hours the backs of the canoemen bent and strained under the heavy poling. The Chief fixed his gaze upon the tense cords and muscles playing underneath the hunting shirt of the bowman, and wondered if they were made of steel, for they gave no sign of

relaxing. At two o'clock, after ten hours' traveling without rest, the party cooked dinner on a sandy shore, and then pushed on once more. Two portages were made around different falls. The current had become a continuous rapids and the hills were becoming higher with each mile, until, at six o'clock, the smaller of the mountains were reached. Here the Chief spoke to the figure in front of him and suggested making camp; but the Man never heard, and his restless energy drove him on until, at eight o'clock, as the sun disappeared over the mountains, the canoe was beached, the supper cooked and the hemlock cut for the beds.

About the friendship fire the two Ojibways gazed across the flames at the uneasy figure, first shifting one foot and then the other. The Fox was plainly weary with the strain of the day's work and sat drooping near the fire; the Man seemed not at all weary, but sat far into the night alone after his companions had rolled into their blankets. In the morning it was his ax sinking into the pine that awakened his companions, and by sunrise they were once more embarked.

For a time they followed the river, then they took a faint Indian trail over the mountains to a lake, then across another mountain to a second lake, always traveling rapidly, the Man leading as if driven by some awful and relentless energy which took no account of the limits of human endurance. For many days they traveled thus, sometimes crossing mountains, sometimes traversing lakes and often poling and paddling up swift-flowing rivers, stopping not for noon of day and often not even for noon of night.

The Man's energy was untiring; plainly he was rapidly wearing out his companions, who looked upon him in wonder, for they had never before seen a man travel as hard as their strange companion. At length the Chief was moved to speak:

"The White Brother has come to seek the voice of the Great Spirit, and he has now come many days to the

land where no one but the Red Brother has been before; the White Brother is strange. He looks no stronger than the Fox, yet he travels the trail with the swiftness of Menegan, the Wolf, after the red deer. He knows no rest, he is the panther that never wearies; but he must go slow. If he would hear the voice of Mitchie Manito, he must listen quietly beside the rapids, he must hearken in the stillness of the forest."

Thus the Man listened beside the rapids, and their silvery note only served to call up the voice of the vision beside the quiet waters far away; and, as often as he sat within the spray of the falls, the roar of the water spoke to him only of the depths of the Girl's wonderful nature. At night upon his hemlock bed with the starlight upon his face the forest seemed to him but the expression of the same calm that came in the Girl's presence; all these he already knew. But nowhere came rest. It mattered not that the mountains spoke to him of the lofty nature and purity of his vision, they still left him as wavering, as doubting and as restless as at the start.

For weeks he traveled unceasingly through all the isles of the Temple of the Great Mother Nature in search of the Shrine of the Great Spirit. Feverishly had his zeal driven him onward, until the Indians traveling behind him had dragged their feet and stumbled in utter exhaustion, but the Man had not found help, neither had any word come to him in answer to his questioning, and though worn in body, his awful spirit still drove him onward. But at last he had begun to lose faith in the Red Gods, and had come close to the fire to warm his cooling hope.

The Chief, weary and worn by the killing pace, but looking upon his friend only in kindness, tried to revive his drooping hope.

"The White Brother has turned from the Wolf upon the trail of the red deer, to the fire which travels with the winds. The Indians are weary, and the White Brother is weary, but his spirit knows no rest, but drives him onward; he is the

iron that bends but does not break. The Great Spirit has not spoken and my brother is sad, but the Great Spirit is wise; he loves his strong spirit and he will speak to him at last. We must rest here beside the waters of Kabinakagami for two days while I gain my strength, when we will cache our provisions and cross over the lake, and the White Brother and old Chief will leave the Fox for three days and go to find the Lake of Enchantment which no man has seen for more than a hundred years, and where Mitchie Manito, the Mighty, will surely speak to my brother."

The two days dragged through their slow course, and on the morning of the third day, after being consumed with the fires of restless inactivity, the party made a cache of most of the provisions and the rifle, and taking only rod, blankets, hunting ax and pistol, started in the canoe for the opposite shore of Kabinakagami.

Here the Fox was to await the return of his companions until noon of the sixth day, after which he was to make his way on foot to the cache, there to wait six days more, and then return to the wigwams of his people, if the two had not come back by that time, and to carry the word that they had taken the Long Trail where the moccasin prints all go in one direction and none come back.

Taking the canoe on his shoulders the Man forged ahead while the Chief followed with provisions hung from a tumpline on his head. For two days the Man had been as a hound in leash, but now, driven by the same unseen energy, he traveled rapidly, though painfully, over the barren mountain of jagged rock, until he came to a crystal stream flowing with incredible swiftness between the mountains.

This the Chief decided must be the way that his father had spoken about around the camp-fires, the only way by which one could reach the Lake of Enchantment, for the forest was dense and impenetrable and it would take weeks to cut and break a trail; therefore one must pole up the swift stream

as far as possible and then walk up in water when poling became no longer possible, until its source was reached. With the Indian in the bow, they poled upstream. All went well for several hours, when the pole of the Chief slipped while in a bad stretch of white water and the canoe swung sideways and overturned. The rod and bacon were saved, and the blankets washed upon a rock, but the flour and tea were lost.

"Shall we go on, or shall we return to the cache for food?" inquired the Chief. His companion for answer only set his teeth tighter and headed again upstream.

At four o'clock they went ashore to build a fire to dry the blankets, for the nights were very cold and the winds searching. After their pitiful and scanty evening meal, the Man started for the stream for a drink of cold water. Lying flat on the rocks, he was leaning over the water drinking, when the snap of a branch startled him. On the bank across the stream a doe and her fawn stepped from the forest into the water to drink. Slowly his hand crept back toward the holster, for the Man was hungry, but at the same time the eyes of the doe looked fearlessly into his own in mild surprise; his hand paused and then crept back to the rock. Who but a coward would shoot a mother and her offspring, even if it were a deer? The Man was no coward; besides, the Red Gods had made the forest creatures and made them a beautiful red, so the Man gazed at them and smiled as they drank and then slowly faded into the darkening woods.

All the next day the two poled up the stream and at nightfall made a supper of bacon without bread or tea. The following day poling against the rushing rapids was no longer possible, so the Man dragged and carried the canoe, while the Chief carried the blankets. The Indian often stumbled and staggered and his companion's face was lined with fatigue. Both were plainly reaching the limits of their endurance, when, with the sun still

four hours above the tree-tops, the noise of water falling a great height came to them; and, on advancing, they beheld the stream as a silver thread glittering in the sunlight as it fell over the edge of the mountain before them. By hard work for several hours cutting a trail, they were at length enabled to reach the mountain top and to gaze at last upon the fabled Lake of Enchantment.

To the men looking down in wonder, sore and bruised, weary in mind and body, and tortured by the first pangs of hunger, the sky-blue water, deeply framed in the dark green of the forest-covered mountains and barred with a band of gold across the blue where the sun declining in a mountain gap shot its rays across the unruffled water, seemed to be the mysterious spring that is said to be found bubbling where grows the Tree of Life in the Sacred Grove of the Great Spirit. The gaunt face of the Indian smiled into the burning eyes of the other. "Here at last the Great Spirit will open his heart."

So they stayed beside the Enchanted Lake for two days, lost in the spell of mystery and wonderment, the Chief spending his time in catching trout, snaring rabbits and shooting part-ridges, while the Man sat alone beside the wonderful waters or climbed the mountains searching the enchanted scene with fast ebbing hope.

It was the same old conflict of soul, the same joy which the vision always brought to him, the same doubt and lack of confidence in himself. It was too grave a matter; had it involved his own happiness alone he would not have hesitated, but would have risked all; but the Girl was at peace; could he possibly risk her happiness on a doubt? His own heart struggling with his inclinations whispered that there must be no doubt before he should speak to her. Yet no word came to him from the silence.

It had been a long quest. For many days it had driven the Man with unrelenting force over mountain and valley, by its power he had worn out

his red companions, and converted himself into a mass of sinew and bone. As he sat shivering in the wind alone for the last time upon the mountain top, looking down upon the exquisite beauty of the scene spread before him, he came to a full realization that his quest had utterly failed. The down-cast eyes, the drooping shoulders and shuffling feet, as he came down to the camp-fire, all spoke too plainly that the tireless spirit of hope and expectation that had been driving power, had fled, leaving him entirely worn out and weary.

That night close to the fire the Indian and his friend held a long council. The latter spoke slowly and quietly: "The Great Spirit hides his face from the White Brother and his long search has come to an end in failure; the ducks are all flown, the coats of the red deer turn to gray as the cold winds blow upon the red flame; and tomorrow we must start for our cache and travel like the winds which are fast rushing upon us bringing the chill that shall bind up the rivers in icy stillness so we cannot use the canoe, when we shall perish in the wilderness."

For a while the Chief looked fondly at the Man, at a loss what word he could speak to him, for the old Indian had grown to love the strange man. He had gloried in his strong body and his stronger spirit; and he did not wish to admit the failure which seemed inevitable.

Finally he crossed over to the figure huddling beside the flame, and placing his hand upon his shoulder said to him: "The Great Spirit is forever wise and good and has only love in his heart for all his children. He has not spoken as we had expected, but he must love my brother because his thoughts are pure and his hands are clean and his spirit is strong; perhaps he is only trying his spirit and at last will speak to him, when he least expects. The Red Chief has had a dream that the Great Mitchie Manito will come very close to my brother and speak his irrevocable word. The air

grows cold; for seven nights the ice has formed on the canoe, and tonight there is the smell of snow coming out of the North. In the morning we must travel fast, if we would reach our wigwams again."

At daybreak the two awakened in a new world. The Frost King had covered the earth with a soft, white blanket, and spread a film of ice over the surface of the lake. It was the change from Summer to Winter, as the messenger of the North had passed, bringing his first warning of the snows. Both men knew that for two weeks there would be a lull and the sun would continue to shine; then the Winter and the snows and the cruel winds would sweep down in their fury. In the short interval the return to the wigwams must be accomplished. After drinking the hot partridge broth and eating trout and bacon, they started down the mountain. All was intense silence, no twig snapped beneath their feet as they trod upon the white carpet; all day long they traveled downstream, sometimes in the canoe, dashing rapidly down the current between the rocks, sometimes walking in the icy water carrying the canoe. The next morning they left the stream and crossed over the mountain, and when the sun was two hours above the pines they came to the shore of Kabinakagami, where the Fox was anxiously waiting, and at once launched the canoe for the further shore for the point where the cache had been made.

The winds from the northwest blowing hard between the mountains the full length of the lake whipped up the water in a heavy sea in midlake. For a distance the canoe hugged the shore in the lee of the mountain, protected from the wind until opposite the cache on the further shore. Here the Chief, paddling from the stern, anxiously scanned the wave-tossed water, and then continued along under the mountain. The Man, realizing it was purposed to follow the shore of the lake around for fifteen miles to the cache which lay only a mile and a half directly across the water, rebelled at the necessity which seemed to dictate an unneces-

sary delay, and rising in the canoe gazed at the intervening space of water.

It was a glorious October day, with the wind blowing crisp and cold from off the mountain and the sun shining brightly upon the deep blue water as it leaped into white foam. The drooping spirit of the Man responded to the strong mood of Nature, and he thought, "Could not the crossing be made direct without circling the great distance of the lake?" But his expression was less fortunate, for, as he turned to the old Chief, he said, "It is a mile and a half across to the cache, to go around is fifteen; are the Indians afraid to try it?"

It was an unfortunate speech, as he immediately realized, and it did not express his thought, for he knew that his companions were the most expert canoe men in the world and that the Ojibway tongue has no word for "fear"; he also knew their complete understanding of the limits of a canoe's sea qualities, but he had spoken and he could retract only at the cost of suspicion as to his own courage.

Without replying the Chief slowly swung the bow of the canoe toward the leaping waves and headed for the cache. For a distance the mountain protected them from the sweep of the wind, but, leaving its shelter in the rear, as they came nearer the middle, the waves became larger and the spray began to drive over the Fox kneeling in the bow. It was too late to turn back, the die was cast. The three were making heroic efforts, but against the inevitable, though the Man seemed not to realize the perilous situation.

Sadly, but without bitterness, the Chief spoke to him. "The sun of the life of Kash has been rising for many Summers and has almost completed its circle, and is now setting in the West. His voice has been heard for years in the Council Lodge and Mitchie Manito has shown him many things; but the sun of the young men is just rising in the sky, and must still travel a large circle. Since the canoe will bear only two after it is overturned, the young men will cling to it and be driven by



the water to the shore, while the old Chief will try to swim."

In agony of spirit the gaunt Man bent his head as he slowly realized the danger which his thoughtless word had occasioned and the sacrifice which his companion would make. For a moment he suffered in silence, then quietly ripping off his heavy shoepacs he straightened his back and smiled brightly and calmly into the face of his friend.

"The Chief is old, his muscles are no longer like the sinew of the moose, and, as he has said, his voice has long been heard in the Councils. The White Brother has held in his arms the Chief's baby, he has laid his cheek against the soft red one; he remembers that there are four other children and a wife waiting in the wigwam of Kash for his return; shall they go cold and hungry because the old Chief has entered upon his long journey? They need both the Chief and his son, and in the near-by lodge a maid awaits the coming of the Fox. Listen: You have said that the White Brother is strong and never wearies, and it is true. There is no Council fire where his voice has ever been heard among his own people; there runs not a drop of his blood in the veins of any living creature; no maiden awaits his return. The White Brother loves his Indian friends, but today the Chief and his son are the servants of the White Brother and must obey his command to cling to the canoe, while he will give himself to the care of the Red Gods of the waters, who will bring him to shore."

His strong jaws shut like a steel trap as he finished and began to strap the blankets to the cross-piece of the canoe, and the Chief, looking at his glowing face, knew that his word was final.

In midlake the canoe was flung by the waves as if it had been a mere cork, and the water dashed over the sides, but it steadily held its course and approached the cache, the Man bailing with a kettle to keep it afloat. For a time it seemed as if the skill of the canoemen would outmatch the leaps of the water which drove across the kneel-

ing men, but, when half a mile from shore, the wind and the waves swung the light craft broadside to the dash of the water, and, before the canoemen could twist it into its course, a wave had broken over the side, swamping the canoe and turning the party into the icy water.

The Man began his fight with the waves. Glancing around for an instant he was dismayed to behold the Fox swimming just behind him. The Indian merely said, "I come with my White Brother." Slowly the two fought their way toward the shore, often buried beneath the water but always forging ahead, until success seemed certain. Then the strokes of the Indian became slower. The Man urged him to more rapid efforts, but without avail. At fifty yards the Indian seemed scarcely to move, and, turning to his companion a brave and smiling face said to him, "The Fox has run his course and he goes upon the long journey, for his leaf withers upon the Tree of Life." Quickly the Man had turned upon his back and spoken roughly to the Indian to place his hand upon his shoulder and to keep his feet moving.

They moved slowly despite the powerful strokes of the Man, who, though nearly spent, struggled onward. The chill of the icy water seemed to strike through to his soul; the Indian dragged heavily upon him, and it seemed as though it had grown dark and misty. But from out of the mist above him he seemed to see a calm, sweet face looking earnestly into his eyes—the face of the Girl beside the quiet waters, and as he struggled fiercely in desperate effort, a voice came to him clear and distinct above the howl of the wind and the dash of the waves. Clear, yet very distant, the Great Spirit spoke: "Come back, Strong Son, come back, from the shadows and the rapids to the sunshine and rest of the quiet waters where your restless spirit shall find peace."

The feet of the Man sank until they touched the spit of sand projecting into the lake, and dragging his companion



ashore, he turned his head in gratitude to the open heavens, as he beheld the canoe and the old Chief driving rapidly toward the beach. That night the three made their camp far upon their journey. The face of the Man glowed brighter than the leaping flames; no restless shadows chased across his features.

Quickly the journey to the wigwams was made in advance of the freezing streams, and in haste the Man made ready to depart. At the last moment he went to the Council Lodge with only the Indian Chief, who for a while sat in silence, then rose, and extending both his hands uttered the words of Parting:

"The Great Spirit has made both the Red and the White Brother, and loves the White Brother not less than the Red; for, beneath the pale skin, Mitchie Manito has given him a heart of the deepest crimson, and a spirit that is strong beyond most of his chil-

dren, and in his love he has spoken the word of Peace to the White Brother. The Chief's lodge is always open to the brave White Son whom he will not forget, for he loves the White Brother, and if he shall never look upon his face again, he will carry it in his heart as he travels the Long Trail, and will search for it in the Lodge of the Great Spirit. Farewell!"

In haste the Man journeyed back to his own country. In joy and fear he approached the bend of the river around which lay the quiet pool. On the banks, with her hair shining like gold in the warm sunshine, her eyes blue as the clear depths of the heavens, with face uplifted and turned toward the stream, stood the Girl. The Great Spirit had spoken truly as he always speaks to his children of earth who will but listen. For, in the calm depth of the Girl's spirit, the Man found the rest, the quiet peace of his soul.



## IN A GARDEN

By Archibald Sullivan

### I—THE BUTTERFLY

WHO passes now to make the rose blush red?  
Who calls the lark to wind her carolings?  
No king—no prince—there only flutters by  
Dear Summer's herald on two turquoise wings.

### II—THE PASSION FLOWER

Long time it wove its tapestry of leaves  
And patient green upon the lichen wall,  
Envy the thousand stars—but when it bloomed  
Found that it glowed more beautiful than them all!

### III—APPLE BLOSSOMS

So white, so white was every laden bough  
That mating birds on wings that come and go  
Scarce dared to light and raise their triumph-song,  
For fear they sang to Spring amid the snow.

## A QUESTION OF BACKGROUND

By Katharine Metcalf Roof

CHEERLESS as the routine of her life had been, the prospect opened up to her by Miss Wheeler's announcement seemed even more depressing. The dull shock of this realization brought to her mind that dry aphorism to the effect that nothing is so bad that it might not be worse.

With a murmured request for a few hours in which to think it over she had closed the school door upon the confusion of the opening-day departures.

As she walked the few blocks from the school to her home—that home which consisted of a third-floor-back hall bedroom in an uptown boarding-house—she went over the situation drearily. The Elevated trains crashed continuously over her head. The wind caught at her hat and skirts and blew the dust about in eddying circles, accented by the rattle of loose papers. The conditions were certainly not conducive to reflection and decision. Suddenly realizing that she was not obliged to bear the added discomfort of this dinginess and noise, she turned into a side street and went down Eighth avenue, skirting the edge of the Park. Yet even the Park looked bleak and uninviting with the unseasonable sharpness of the October day.

The events of her New York life passed through her mind in monotonous review; she had taught twelve years now in girls' schools. She had gone from the colorless environment of village life to college—an agreeable change—and immediately after leaving college she had begun teaching, hating it passionately, at first, then gradually coming to accept it. But the school

life had never brought her any compensation save the obvious one of serving to provide shelter, food and clothing. She had declined the few invitations that came her way.

She saw other teachers availing themselves of these meager social opportunities—the duty of chaperonage at a *matinée*, an invitation to lunch with the children, or perhaps an occasional reception where the parent took a special fancy to the teacher of her children. But the prospect did not appeal to Eleanor either as a pleasure in itself or as a means to an end. She had continued to take her amusements with the few friends she had living in the city—girls she had known at college who were, like herself, supporting themselves. More infrequently she made acquaintances at one of her cheerless boarding-house homes.

In the Summer she stayed with her family in the village where she had been born, or boarded for a time at some inexpensive resort at the seashore or in the mountains. At these places the other boarders were not apt to be people of her own social class. This had been her life for the last twelve years. It was an existence that gave her almost no opportunity for meeting men, for the average boarding-house man is not an individual likely to incite the interest of a woman of Eleanor's requirements, and her married friends seemed never to think of inviting her to meet their husbands' male acquaintances. Once or twice in her life had she met a man who interested her, but circumstances had somehow turned the possibility of acquaintanceship aside. One of these men, a young architect,

had attracted her more than anyone else she had ever known. She had asked him to call and he had come. Two other boarders were receiving calls at the same time. The parlor was cold and retained a well-defined odor of dinner. There was a constant passing up and down the stairs past the parlor door, followed by the slamming of the outside door. One of the boarders, evidently suffering from a dearth of conversational resource with her guest, availed herself of the passive pleasure of listening to the conversation of Eleanor and her caller. Unable to rise superior to this oppressive environment, Eleanor had appeared constrained and commonplace, and the man had gone away wondering how he could have thought her attractive. He had never called again.

Yet Eleanor was not commonplace or uninteresting. She was what people call a sweet-looking woman, with, at times, a certain delicate prettiness. She was neither aggressive nor strenuous, but she was reserved. It was necessary to meet her more than once to feel the charm of her. There was nothing striking in her appearance to make a positive appeal to the attention.

Twelve years of teaching and boarding-house life! It had been enough to make her eyes tired, her mouth joyless, and to draw fine lines about her forehead.

She climbed the stairs to her room after having captured a letter from the careless litter on the hall-seat, closed her door on the inevitable smell of soup, and sat down on her Oriental divan that was a bed at night. In close proximity, facing her, was her bureau containing some family photographs, framed, and a well-bred assortment of silver-covered toilette articles. Behind the door was her washstand. The room held, besides, a small table and a shelf of books, among which a number of school text-books were scattered. Her eyes roved over the flowered paper walls upon which hung a few brown prints—a Botticelli Madonna, a Burne-Jones lady and a symbolic Watts figure—the usual choice

of the cultured literary taste that believes itself artistic. Her eyes went to the window, taking in the backs of the houses of the next block. Loathsome as this boarding-house existence was, a house position at the school would be worse—shut up with the girls from morning till night, and many evenings besides. And yet she could not blame Miss Wheeler. Things had just gone suddenly wrong with the school financially and Miss Wheeler had done the best that she could for her in offering her a house position with reduced salary. She would be no worse off financially, rather better, for the cost of the dreary hall-room and tasteless boarding-house food consumed the larger part of her salary.

She turned the tiresome riddle over wearily. It was difficult to decide between a choice of evils. Her eye happened to fall upon her letter. She picked it up, half-heartedly, and opened it, glad of an excuse to defer decision. It was from a married friend living out of town, and contained an unexpected suggestion.

Did Eleanor remember, this friend asked, some advertisements they had both written for a prize contest that had not taken the prize? Well, a man in the advertising business, an acquaintance of her husband's, had visited them the week before, and just for fun she had shown him their advertisements; she had thought Eleanor's so clever and amusing; and the man had said at once, "I'll give that girl a job writing ads any time she wants it." This the friend had written in half-seriousness, adding further on in the letter, "You have always said how you hated teaching. Here's your chance to get out of it if you want to." She had enclosed the man's business address.

The thought came to Eleanor that here was a possible solution. The thought did not come joyously. It was another choice of graynesses. She would have to work all day, all year, with two weeks' Summer vacation. And in a business man's office! With all the traditions of generations of well-bred ancestors she revolted from

the thought of that association. Yet could it be worse than the daily contact with the undeveloped minds of selfish, silly girls and restless children? It would be different, at least.

She glanced at the alarm-clock which served to awaken her at the proper hour five days in the week, and saw that she still had time to go downtown to the man's office before it closed. She had promised Miss Wheeler to give her answer tomorrow.

Mr. Preston's office was in a crowded downtown neighborhood. Men and boys of all classes and nationalities jostled her in the elevator. The elevator-boy was familiar, the errand-boys noisy and jocose, and the men either stared at her with intent to charm or drove their bulk into her obliviously. Before she had decided what she would say or how she would say it, she found herself confronted with the office-boy in Mr. Preston's outer office.

She sent in her card and the office-boy returned with the information that Mr. Preston would see her in a few minutes. She waited twenty-five, and then was admitted to his private office.

Mr. Preston wheeled about in his chair to greet her, but did not rise. He was a commonplace-looking man of about forty, not a gentleman in the social sense of the word, yet his glance carried a certain impression of force, or, at least, of competence. He had the eyes of a man who knows what he wants and seeks the shortest road to getting it.

"Well, Miss Whitredge, what can I do for you?"

Eleanor was a woman who thought directly, although accustomed to the indirectness of good-breeding. She answered in his own fashion.

"I came to see if you would give me a position in your office. My friend, Mrs. Read, thought you might do so."

"Oh, so you are the girl that wrote the Snowflake soap ad? I remember."

Eleanor modestly admitted her authorship. Mr. Preston glanced at her sharply and briefly. "Well, if you think you can do more along that line, I'll give you a chance to try it."

Eleanor realized then that she had not thought quite so conclusively as this, but the man's manner was compelling—not so much from any great personal force as from the impression he conveyed of the value of his time and words. She felt that she must decide now absolutely one way or the other. Metaphorically, she closed her eyes and chose.

"Yes, I would like to try it."

"About the salary, then"—Mr. Preston gave her another brief glance—"I will give you eighteen dollars a week at first, and more later if you are worth it. Is that all right?"

In something of a daze Eleanor murmured that the arrangement would be satisfactory.

"Very well, then," Mr. Preston wheeled back to his desk. "You can begin work the first of the month; that will be two weeks from Monday. Good afternoon, Miss Whitredge."

Again without rising, Mr. Preston nodded dismissal, and turned his attention to his work.

## II

HAVING made one revolutionary change in her mode of life, Eleanor decided upon another. Why, she asked herself, should she endure the disheartening atmosphere of boarding-house life any longer—the enforced companionship with people who were, for the most part, vulgar, inquisitive or uninteresting; the close quarters, the continual surveillance, the evening calls from other guests that not all her reserve could entirely ward off? Why should she not take two small rooms, or even one, at the new woman's hotel, where she might call her soul her own, and live in what at least would be peaceful isolation? Isolation did not constitute her ideal of happiness, yet it was better than enforced companionship.

So she went to the Florence Nightingale to make inquiries. As she waited in the lobby for the clerk to select the keys, she received an odd impression

as she watched the little crowd of gray-haired women who filled the lobby in place of the usual male hotel-lounger. They seemed, too, depressingly similar to the boarding-house types. As she watched them she divined that this contact with life and movement in a public place supplied the lack of excitement in their lives. One old lady with a gown cut out to accommodate a chin and throat that were continuous, walked about asking everyone if they would advise her to go out with her cold. A middle-aged woman with a face whose nervous, disappointed sharpness showed that she had not yet entirely given up the instinct to struggle, admitted that she could not accurately foretell the effect of the weather upon a bronchial cold. She looked as if she felt a distaste for her questioner. An old lady of the facetious type went about soliciting names for some enterprise, whose nature was enrolled upon a sheet of paper which she carried in her hand. She talked in a loud voice with a roving eye for public appreciation of her wit. Eleanor was familiar with the silly egoism of the schoolgirls, but this advanced type was, somehow, more depressing.

She rose, with a sense of some inescapable fate overwhelming her, to meet the suave clerk coming toward her with a handful of keys. He showed her two small connecting rooms for her price, and she took them almost immediately. The furniture, of cheap oak, was fresh and new; the wall coloring agreeable. She moved in at once and felt an interest, such as she had not realized since the first untried years of her boarding-house life, in deciding upon the hanging of her pictures and the placing of her divan.

For the first few weeks she found the large airy dining-room a relief from the crowded closeness of the boarding-house *salle à manger*. She sat at a small table for four. Her companions in this semblance of intimacy were not revealed to her simultaneously. The first night of her arrival she encountered but one—a teacher of elocu-

tion, who commented sentimentally upon the good, the true and the beautiful in a resonant recitative. Eleanor had an uncomfortable sense of eyes turned in their direction when the voice-culturist recited. The second day, at dinner, the other two appeared.

One, a clean-looking, fair-haired girl with a face made up of soft, weak lines, whose mental condition seemed to be one of perpetual astonishment, was a librarian, Eleanor subsequently discovered. The fourth place was filled by a discontented, suspicious, middle-aged woman, who listened to the conversation with the air of one making mental notes of the most unfavorable character.

Fortunately, they were not always there. Yet observation of the other guests proved scarcely more exhilarating. It seemed to her that she had never in all her life seen such a depressing array of colorless women. She found herself classifying the faces—futile, vacuous, sad, empty, lonely faces; the flotsam and jetsam of femininity, cast upon this rock of refuge; many perhaps, like herself, driven there in search of some rightful independence, others in a pathetic desire for companionship; women of all classes and ages, but few of them happy or young.

There was one woman who did not seem to belong; her lashes and brows were somewhat suspiciously dark and her hair of a doubtful gold. Her silken skirts diffused a perfume as she walked. Her hats were large and bloomed with pink roses, or quivered with many plumes. Yet what was there in her face beyond the mere fact of her silly prettiness that the other women did not have, the tired, worried, worn-out women who bore upon them, one and all, the hall-mark of futile striving? Eleanor fell to wondering about it all. She saw herself as one of that army of women, "self-supporting," yet all, in a sense, unsuccessful; doing work of no real significance in the world, missing the real intention of their womanhood.

What was it that she had expected of life when the blind impulse to escape

from the narrowness of her village existence had carried her to New York? Not the dream of the shop-girl who would become the bride of Reginald Montmorency. It had been a simple, dignified, unambitious future that her mind had vaguely outlined—time to enjoy pictures, good music, the theatres, congenial friends to enjoy them with; some incompletely imagined romance, perhaps, and a home of her own ultimately, with her possessions about her, a place in which to entertain her friends. But these things, she had discovered, the city seemed not to offer to the girl, a lady, yet "self-supporting," inconspicuous, yet delicately bred, who went there with position and friends unmade.

No, she did not regret that devotion to her ideals and standards, and yet—to what end had it all been? Must she just go on eating and sleeping and working, growing a little older, a little more tired, a little less good to look at each year, to become gradually like these tragic women about her?

It was with a desperate sense of welcoming anything that constituted a change that she went to her first day's work at the office.

### III

SHE was not fortunate enough to get a seat in the Elevated train, and it seemed to her that despite her constant street-car travel she had never fully realized the preponderance of the unclean, recently arrived foreigner in New York until she found herself in the midst of the crowded downtown street. Yet once inside the large, well-lighted office, filled with the busy click of the typewriters and the general definite air of accomplishment, she felt a greater sense of cheerfulness than she had known for many days. She was shown her desk by a good-natured, familiar telephone girl, and was almost immediately summoned to Mr. Preston's office.

With a brief "Good morning, Miss Whitredge," he handed her a number

of advertisement booklets. "I want some scheme worked out along this line for the Crystal Starch people. Make your sentences short and strong. Notice that Breakfast Food ad in particular. It's a good model."

Eleanor took the booklets back to her desk and began reading them at once. Before she had finished an idea had come to her for exploiting the virtues of Crystal Starch. Presently she became interested in her problem. By eleven o'clock she had three schemes written out ready for Mr. Preston to pass upon.

He went over them rapidly, rattling the paper briskly as he turned the leaves. "This one is excellent with a few changes. This won't do at all. You don't want to use such affected expressions as 'drawing-room' and 'butler's pantry.' These ads are written for sensible, straightforward American people who have parlors and china-closets. You're not writing society hints for the Ladies' Cozy Corner. And don't talk about the influence of environment. You aren't writing for a Boston literary society."

Eleanor colored deeply under his blunt sarcasm and sharp eye, yet it was a natural human touch of temper that moved her, not the desolate, passive resentment aroused by the inmates of the Florence Nightingale. She could not keep her voice from expressing an impersonal coldness instead of an impersonal pleasantness, as she answered:

"Thank you. I see I haven't quite caught the spirit of it yet. I will do those last two over." She put out her hand for the papers. He met her eyes with a quick frown as he handed them back to her.

"You must hit the nail on the head every stroke. Each word must strike right home. And remember—you are writing for The American People, not the Colonial Dames, or the Four Hundred, or the Browning Society, or any other bunch of fakes and snobs." With a brisk wheel Mr. Preston returned to his desk.

Yet when at lunch-time she again



handed in her paper and received his brief approving, "That'll do," she felt all at once the exhilaration of having won out in something.

She worked hard all the afternoon on schemes for the glorification of toilette powder and salad dressing, and although she was glad enough to stop when half-past five came, the fatigue she felt was of a different kind from what she had been accustomed to. She was physically tired, somewhat exhausted, too, mentally; but the sense of weight and oppression that had been a part of her work and life for so many years was somehow not there.

So it was in the days that followed. Her work continued to hold a certain interest for her. In her first week she came to realize the quality of the public which she must reach—the big, crude, mentally undeveloped public of a democracy where wages are higher than salaries and the population is increased principally through steerage emigrants and their descendants. She found that meanings must be spelled in thoughts of one syllable. Everything must be brought down to the level of the child's mind. Yet the very reduction, elimination and simplification absorbed her. The practical application of the psychology of suggestion upon which the science of modern advertising is founded interested her in the framing of seductive sentences calling attention to the advantages of soaps, electric motors, spring mattresses, carpet-sweepers and silver polish.

She never forgot the day when John Preston called her into his office and said, "You are worth more than I am paying you. I am going to give you a raise." She went away in a glow of something like happiness, yet scarcely conscious of the added advantage of the dollars.

#### IV

SHE had come, in her one-sided association with John Preston, to have a certain respect for him. He was a

man who had made something of himself along the line of his ambitions. He was not a man of well-bred associations. He had had only what is known as a common-school education. His intelligence was narrow, but practical. He was distinctly one who could meet emergencies. He supported his father and mother and frequently assisted a ne'er-do-well brother. He had self-control and did not lose his temper in the office. Sarcasm of a heavy-handed variety was his only outlet, and more than once he had almost brought the tears to Eleanor's eyes by his curt "No good," followed by the depositing of her morning's work in his scrap-basket.

One day he had returned her article to her with the remark, "You'll have to forget your high-toned, school-teacher words in this business if you expect to succeed, Miss Whitredge." But that evening as she was gathering up her papers—the last one out of the office save Mr. Preston himself—he had turned at the door on the eve of departure and walked over to her desk.

"I am afraid I was a little short with you about that motor-boat ad. You mustn't hold it up against me. Everything's been going at sixes and sevens today."

"It's of no consequence," replied Eleanor gently but coldly, adding untruthfully, "I had quite forgotten it."

He stood a moment looking at her. She was dressed in her customary neat, dark dress, with white cuffs at the throat and wrist, her soft hair as orderly as when she had come in the morning. The negative gray look had almost entirely left her face in the last few weeks.

"You look tired," he said abruptly. "Guess I'm working you too hard. You'd better take a day off tomorrow. It's Saturday."

"Oh, it's not necessary in the least. I'm not at all tired," Eleanor assured him hastily. She was curiously moved by this unexpected consideration.

"Yes, do it. I want you to," he replied authoritatively. And in some inexplicable way she felt it decided.

Mr. Preston then left abruptly without any suggestion of waiting the minute or two longer it would have taken her to put on her wraps.

She spent the Saturday and Sunday with some friends in the suburbs, coming back to town early Monday morning. Mr. Preston added to his usual curt, "Good morning, Miss Whitredge," "There, you do look better! I knew you needed a rest."

"It was very good of you," said Eleanor softly. He frowned and pushed a pile of papers toward her. "I'd like to see those all done by three o'clock, please," was his reply.

Feeling rebuked and mortified Eleanor took up the papers and made a swift exit, not knowing that Mr. Preston's eyes reluctantly followed her.

## V

THE Spring was early that year. April came with unusual softness. The office windows were open most of the time, letting in the fresh warmth. Mr. Preston, coming one morning with his vigorous directness to Eleanor's desk, caught her idly looking up at the small section of blue sky visible between the opposite buildings. She started and flushed as she heard his voice.

"Did I startle you?"

"I'm afraid my thoughts were playing truant," she answered, with a little smile.

He smiled slightly in return. "Well, you must come back to school now. Here's a fresh lot of work for you." His voice had an unusual mildness.

They went over the material together. When it was finished Mr. Preston lingered to say, "It's a fine day, but unseasonable."

"People are always saying that about nice days," Eleanor ventured to smile. "But how can anything nice be unseasonable?"

A responsive smile began upon Mr. Preston's face, then compressed suddenly into lines of severity. "Let me know how you are getting on by eleven

o'clock," was his answer, and again Eleanor felt passionately angry at herself for her brief relaxation from the business attitude.

"He's just a common man with no sense of the decent courtesies of life," she said to herself as she went back to her desk. "It's the last time—the very last—that I will ever speak a word to him of anything but business."

As she stood waiting for the elevator at noon he happened to come out of the office at the same moment, and catching sight of her came up to give her some further instruction about the article she was working upon. Just as he had finished, the elevator came down empty save for one passenger, and stopped to take on Eleanor and a man who was also waiting. The man crowded on ahead of her after the manner of his kind. The elevator-boy—one of the slip-shod, inattentive variety—started to slam the heavy iron door just as Eleanor was about to step into the car. All that she knew of it was the sudden consciousness of a strong arm that pulled her back with abrupt force.

"Damned little idiot, I'll get him discharged tonight!" she heard him exclaim savagely.

With her heart beating rapidly from the little shock Eleanor quite forgot that she had been brought up to believe that gentlemen should not swear in the presence of ladies. She met his eyes a moment as he growled anxiously, "You're not hurt, are you? It didn't touch you, did it?"

"Oh, no, not at all. I'm all right," she replied hurriedly. Mr. Preston looked away as quickly as she did. "I will get to work on the soap article as soon as I come in from luncheon," she said.

"Oh, no hurry about that," he muttered. "Use the other elevator till tomorrow."

She went down obediently in the other elevator, which descended at that moment, with a consciousness of something stirred within her. She did not analyze, but she felt still the strong grip of a man's hand on her arm.

That evening she and Mr. Preston left the office at the same moment. As they stood together waiting for the elevator, he remarked:

"I got that good-for-nothing boy bounced all right!"

She looked up. "Poor little fellow!"

"No—no poor little fellow about it. A miserable lot of idle, shiftless, muddle-headed youngsters this generation's producing to do our work for us. If they got brought up standing oftener it would be for their own good in the long run."

The elevator stopped for John Preston—it often passed Eleanor by—and they both entered it in the New York commercial fashion, although it was already jammed. She was conscious of her nearness to John Preston in that moment's brief descent. For the second that their eyes met she fancied that he had also been conscious.

"Do you take the Subway or the 'L'?" he asked as they poured out of the doorway with the crowd.

"The Elevated is a little nearer for me," Eleanor replied.

"It's just about as near for me. Believe I'll go up that way myself tonight."

They passed up the dirty steps with the crowd to the packed platform, and into the car, which was already full. Twice Mr. Preston, putting out his arm, prevented the crowd from crushing against Eleanor. Side by side they clung to straps while the usual downtown throng of that hour—business men, fat and complacent, thin and anxious, nervous and incompetent, empty-faced clerks and shrill typewriter girls—surged about them.

"The cars in this city aren't fit for a lady to travel in any more," observed John Preston, and somehow the remark surprised and pleased Eleanor.

He bade her good night at her station. His way lay further uptown. She recalled after she left him that he had a pleasant smile.

## VI

THE weather continued to be more like Summer than Spring. The leaves

seemed to come out in a night and the sunshine was almost perpetual.

One morning Eleanor put on a soft embroidered muslin blouse in place of her usual plain shirt-waist. On the way to the office she found herself unable to resist a bunch of sweet peas proffered by an Italian boy in the street. She felt for the first time in years a certain sense of the joy of the Spring without its tragic wistfulness.

About four o'clock she went into Mr. Preston's office to submit her day's work.

"Take a seat," he directed her brusquely.

She took one and looking off toward the tree-tops in City Hall Park let her thoughts slip into a longing for the country as he read. She looked up to find his eyes upon her.

"Where do you live, Miss Whitredge?"

The question was so unexpected that she replied a little confusedly, "Here in New York, you mean?"

"Yes."

"At the Florence Nightingale."

"That's a woman's hotel, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Do you like it?"

"No." Eleanor qualified her severity with a laugh.

"Sort of a cat-and-dog affair, isn't it?"

"Rather more cat than dog, I should say."

"Why do you live there, then?"

"Oh, it seemed as if it might be more cheerful than a boarding-house, and it is—in a way."

"You are living alone, then?"

"Yes."

Mr. Preston in his turn regarded the tree-tops in the park. He wheeled half-way back toward his desk before he spoke again.

"Have you ever had dinner in the garden at the Rockingham?"

Eleanor replied that she never had.

"Would you care to go there tonight? It's such a warm day—" For the first time in her knowledge of him Mr. Preston did not finish a sentence.

In spite of her sense of shock at the

proposition, Eleanor found herself replying quite promptly that she would like it very much. Then Mr. Preston had returned abruptly that the sweet-pickle ad was all right, but that he would have to give further consideration to the one for the water-proof paint.

Recognizing her dismissal, Eleanor left, quivering with conflicting emotions. She had promised to go out and dine with him. He was not the kind of man that she had known in her small social circle—not the kind of man she could ever have associated with herself in her thoughts. Yet she was not sorry she had promised to go with him. She knew that she was looking forward to the evening with some little sense of excitement. Was it just because he was a man? . . . Had she come to that? Her face flushed a passionate red; sharp tears stung her eyes. Odds and ends of cruel jokes she had heard of desperate spinsterhood came back to her. Her face throbbed with the consciousness of their significance. She clenched her hands, struggling with her tears.

As she sat there shaken, fighting for her self-control, she became suddenly aware of Mr. Preston's presence. He hesitated half an instant, then, either because he was first of all a practical creature of business or because he was possessed of a greater sense of delicacy than one might expect, he began talking at once about the advertisements, not giving her the necessity to reply until she had had time to recover herself. While he was identifying and marking the paragraphs that he wanted altered, she managed to regain her self-control. At the door of her little compartment he turned to say, without looking at her:

"If there is any reason why you would rather not go tonight—we can just as well put it off until some other evening."

She contrived a natural smile as she assured him that she had no desire to change the time. She thought it would be delightful to go that evening.

## VII

WHEN she came down and found him waiting for her in the lobby of the Florence Nightingale she could not repress a smile at the incongruity of his figure in that setting. Whatever Mr. Preston might lack it was not masculinity.

As they paused at the crossing to pick their way among the passing vehicles Mr. Preston took a strong, possessive hold of her arm to guide her, remarking as he did so:

"You seem out of place, somehow, in that old maids' home."

Eleanor replied, laughing, that she was glad of that.

The dinner began cheerfully and progressed without dragging. Mr. Preston ordered sparkling moselle without asking her if she liked it. The fountain in the centre of the stone court shimmered in the electric light, and Eleanor said that she loved to eat out of doors and wondered that we didn't have more such places, like the continental people; and Mr. Preston replied that he supposed they might have good ideas over there, but as for him, give him America every time. And then he filled up her glass and proposed a toast "To the next time," and Eleanor drank it with a responsive smile.

They talked of newspaper topics and of the parts of the country they had come from. Mr. Preston unburdened himself of some family affairs in a semi-confidential way. Eleanor was surprised with the kindness of his limited yet uncompromising standards. He did not attempt to talk shop. Half-way through the dinner he suggested that it was getting cooler and that she had better put on her jacket. And although protesting that she was not in the least cool, she submitted to having the jacket put on and knew that she liked the considerate tyranny of it.

When he left her at the door of the Florence Nightingale, he held her hand a full minute in his strong, capable clasp as he said, "We must do this

often this Summer. I don't like to think of you in this monkey-and-parrot place. It isn't any place for you. You mustn't live here another year." And when she met the look in his eyes the hot color surged over her face and she was grateful for the uncertain street light that concealed it.

She sat down in her room and looked

out over the roof-tops. She saw more clearly now. The look in his eyes had been unmistakable. Even out of her slender experience she could recognize its meaning.

No, he was not the kind of man she could possibly have conceived of herself as marrying, and yet—she could feel still the tingling warmth of his hand on hers.



## SALUTATION

By Jeannette I. Helm

THOUGH all the sea keep our bodies asunder,  
 Though we should miss by a turn of the street,  
 This is the thought we must ponder and wonder—  
 Some day, some hour, we surely will meet.  
 Friend who was born for me, shaped for me, made for me,  
 Formed for my fate as the wax to the flame;  
 You who unknowing, have still lent your aid for me,  
 Here's to you, Friend—though I know not your name!

Whether you strive to conceal or to show it,  
 When we strike palms, and my eyes meet your eyes,  
 Spirit will leap out to spirit and know it,  
 Though it were hidden in twice the disguise.  
 Friend I have thought of, dreamed of, and yearned for,  
 Who can inherit the best I can be,  
 Though your sails know not the course they are turned for,  
 Here's to you, Friend—who are coming to me!



## INFORMATION WANTED

ELLA—I always keep him at arm's length.  
 STELLA—How long is his arm?



IT takes two to make a marriage, but only one to mar one.

# THE ANGEL AT THE GATE

By Edward Boltwood

**B**RUCE MENTEITH stepped briskly out of the elevator, with his latch-key ready in his fingers. His youthful face, tanned by the sun of the Adirondacks, was animated.

"'Tis lucky you are to be so well again, Mr. Menteith," declared the janitor. "Me and the old woman called a couple of times at that hospital, sir, before they took you away from New York. There was one night, they told us——"

"Yes, Grady, it was close sailing one night," said Menteith. "You and Ellen were very kind-hearted to look me up. No, I'll carry the valise."

It was a positive pleasure to do things for himself. He banged the door vigorously, and thought how he had staggered out of it three months ago, leaning on his doctor's arm, and with the pneumonia stabbing him in the side. He walked from the sitting-room to the bed-chamber, and gazed with intense satisfaction at the shower-bath.

"No more floating thermometers," he chuckled.

In the spacious studio he dropped, laughing, into his favorite chair. His illness had clarified existence inconceivably. The world was closer to him, and he seemed, in turn, to be a more essential part of the world, since he had been so near to passing out of it. He strolled about the studio, touching the stretched canvases, the model-throne, the color-box and tray of brushes, the easel with its half-finished crayon sketch.

"Oh, that truck!" he exclaimed, eying the drawing scornfully. "Think of the great picture—and that truck!"

The fading light forced him to content himself with arranging his materials for the morning. Then he went out to dinner. The familiar table in the café and the beaming welcome of old Pierre did not gratify Menteith as he had expected. He ate impatiently his first dinner after weeks of invalidism. To work at the great picture was all he wanted now.

The idea of it came to him when he rested one afternoon among the pines of Saranac, staring at a gloomy, greenish-black mountain and a rocky peak jutting from the top of it. It was nearly dusk. A shaft from the red sun set the point of rock afire, and above it, framed in the sky, Menteith saw his picture.

The vision left him dazed, although he was usually able to deal with inspirations. The difficulty with this inspiration was that it was not a product of his creative faculty, but of his memory. The picture was something that he, and he alone, had seen before. He had seen it in the hospital, when he was looking, with a mind momentarily clear, beyond the gate of death.

There was nothing very strange about this belief. Menteith's doctor had been startled often by the accuracy with which his convalescent patient remembered hallucinations and speeches of delirium. Trained by his profession to record ideas mechanically, Menteith was sure that his brain had recorded what he saw at a moment when he was dying.

"Coffee, m'sieu'?" proposed Pierre.

"A big glass," said Menteith. "I



can't sleep, whether I drink it or not."

## II

MENTEITH had studied under an old Düsseldorf man. He used the method of preliminaries taught there—the sketch in color, the full-sized cartoon to be traced on the canvas in Caledonian brown and turps, the picture finished in every detail as he went along. He was not surprised now to be able and, indeed, to be compelled, to discard this tedious system. By the first light of the morning he was sketching on the canvas with charcoal, and his background was blocked when his model arrived.

She was a matter-of-fact and beautiful young woman, from whom Tommy Pomeroy had recently painted a prize-winning Madonna.

"Profile, Mr. Menteith?" she asked.

"No, both eyes, Miss Brinkle," he said excitedly.

He enveloped her neck in a gray silk curtain and began painting at once, to Miss Brinkle's astonishment. But she kicked her shoes placidly under the model-chair, and fell to calculating how far that money from the soap advertisement would go toward paying her mother's rent. At length she saw that the artist was in trouble.

"Of course, you haven't told me the subject," she hinted. Menteith smiled grimly and puffed his cigarette.

"No one would understand," he muttered. "Perhaps I don't myself."

"You're painting out of your head, aren't you?"

"I'm trying to, Miss Brinkle."

He returned to the easel, biting his lip savagely. Another hour or two, and the light was gone. Miss Brinkle looked at the blurred canvas.

"Well, Mr. Menteith, that's hard luck."

"It's all right," said Menteith, rubbing his aching eyebrows. "It will come. Bound to take time. Be here early."

"But if you only told me what——"  
"Oh, it's to be a sort of an angel," he laughed desperately. "Faith, hope and charity—you know—Easter card stuff."

Miss Brinkle nodded. "Better let me bring my sister," said she. "The gentlemen at Edler's have done some corking angels from Pauline."

Menteith attempted to quiet the ceaseless quiver of his nerves by ascribing it to his illness. Doubtless he had begun work too soon; Mrs. Grady severely acquiesced as she carried out his untouched dinner tray. In the morning he interpreted the question in Miss Brinkle's sympathetic eyes.

"Don't sleep first-rate yet," he admitted. "Try a higher chin, please."

He did even less painting than on the day before.

"Have you time next week?" sighed Menteith.

"Thursday," Miss Brinkle said, making a note in her appointment book.

But Menteith knew perfectly well now that neither Miss Brinkle nor anybody else could help him. The face of his angel at the gate was gone utterly as if he had never seen it.

Wretchedly tired and dispirited, he strolled uptown in the evening, at first aimlessly, but soon with a goal of which he was surprised he had not thought before. Turning down a cross street, he peered, with curious longing, at the building opposite. It was the private hospital where he had been a patient.

Menteith picked out the windows of his room. Recollections of it came to him with actuality almost physical. He could smell the fresh linen, feel the grateful coolness of a new pillow, hear the nurse's calm voice, taste the superlative lemonade which she brought him at midnight. A stalwart surgeon, with his square, black bag, came out of the front door and paused for a word with two uniformed girls in the vestibule, giving them a cheery "Good night—good luck!" as he walked away. Menteith watched enviously.

He remembered well the alert companionship which pervaded the hospit

al, the spirit which inspired the tireless workers there. What a work was theirs compared to his—the saving of men and women from torment compared to the painting of futile counterfeits! He must labor and fail, solitary in a land of make-believe, while in a real, breathing world the hospital people lived and fought, shoulder to shoulder. Menteith went back to his lonely quarters, homesick for a sick-bed.

### III

THE next day Menteith paid what he described to Miss Elcheater, the superintendent as his party call at the hospital. She received him cordially.

"And of course you would like to see your nurses," she concluded, touching a bell. "Miss Quilty, your day nurse, has left us. Her family made her give up her vocation, I'm sorry to say. But your night nurse is still here."

Menteith hardly recognized Miss Orlibar in her gray street gown and modishly simple hat. They shook hands, laughing.

"I should like some lemonade," said he. "And syrup of—codeine, wasn't it?"

"I'm so glad you need no more of it, Mr. Menteith," she replied.

The mask of her impersonal smile vaguely tantalized him, and he studied her with professional eyes. When he rose he was conscious of a wish to find a model with a face like hers. She was going out, and they said good-bye on the steps.

"The very air of this place is a tonic for discouraged artists," asserted Menteith. "May I come again?"

"Yes, do. Miss Elcheater is fond of keeping track of our old patients."

In the sunlight the young nurse's face looked a little pale, although the graceful lines of it and of her lithe figure were resolute and wholesome.

"Aren't you too much indoors?" suggested Menteith. "What do you say to a drive in the Park some afternoon? You'd be doing me a kindness to relieve my solitude."

"I'd be glad enough to go," she said unaffectedly, "but I'm not often free."

"I know, Miss Orlibar. We'll arrange it soon."

Menteith arranged it as soon as possible and did no painting in the meantime. His dream-picture was more obscure than ever. He paced his apartments drearily and wondered now and then as to the color of Miss Orlibar's eyes. He could not quite decide, even when she was seated beside him in the hansom.

Perhaps this was because she kept them half-closed so much of the time. It was a languorous day, and the droning of a distant band was like a lullaby. Menteith told the driver to walk the horse, and Miss Orlibar sank back against the cushions. Menteith hoped that he would be able to remember in his studio the curve of her chin. She intercepted his scrutiny and flushed delicately.

"I'm sorry to be stupider than usual, Mr. Menteith."

"Nonsense!" he laughed. "You're tired and, I dare say, with reason."

"All patients are not so easily managed as you were," she explained.

"But you don't have to worry today, Miss Orlibar?"

"I'm on night duty, though."

"What?" blurted Menteith, aghast. "Don't dare to tell me that you worked twelve hours last night—and must again! You ought to be resting, and I've made you come out here with me! I'm a selfish brute!"

"Fresh air does one more good than sleep," she declared, and the flush deepened a trifle. "You were very kind to take me."

Her gratitude impressed Menteith not so much as the impracticability of her sparing an afternoon to sit for him. After several consultations, however, the sitting was accomplished, under the chaperonage of Hilda Traeger, an elderly nurse who was vastly more excited by the event than by the capital operation at which she had just assisted. Menteith provided tea, and the time seemed to pass pleasantly for the ladies. But not for the artist. His

new model was of no more suggestive service than Miss Brinkle to the great picture. Because he had been unable to resist a furtive hope that it might be otherwise, Menteith's disappointment was not to be concealed.

"Your painter is not quite himself yet, Miriam," confided Hilda Traeger to Miss Orlibar. "He has a fever, I think. Perhaps a great worry. His eyes, they are queer, and his fingers shake. What is on his mind, *liebchen*?"

Miss Orlibar did not know.

#### IV

MENTEITH had amused the two nurses by making pastel sketches of them, which he finished later and brought one forenoon to the hospital. Miriam met him in the reception-room. She was not in uniform.

"I'm off duty," Miss Orlibar said. "I'm going to take a little vacation. Thank you for the pictures." She looked up from them abruptly. "Why did you come today?" she asked.

"Why?" said Bruce. "I can't tell. I'm glad you're going to have a rest."

"This is splendid of Hilda," she said, and then raised her head with the same odd, abrupt movement. "I want you to meet my mother, Mr. Menteith," she went on. "My mother has come from far away in Canada to be with—to see me. I want you to meet her today."

Puzzled by her tone, Menteith followed her to Miss Elchester's office. The superintendent and a lovely white-haired lady were on the divan, talking earnestly and with their hands intertwined. Menteith was introduced.

"If you realized how your girl stood between me and battle, murder and sudden death, Mrs. Orlibar, when I was laid up here," began Menteith, "you'd see how I can congratulate her mother."

Mrs. Orlibar bowed with old-fashioned gravity. Her eyes, with a sort of hunger in them, were fixed steadfastly on her daughter. Even Miss Elchester's manner was strained.

"We are all proud of Miriam," said the matron of the hospital. "She will do great things in her profession."

"Why do you emphasize the future?" demanded Bruce, with a laugh. "She *has* done great things. I'm an exhibit of them. I'm a sample."

His light words seemed out of keeping. It was a relief to escape from the tense atmosphere of the room. He was amazed at the tremor of Miriam's hand when she gave it to him.

The sky was overcast and leaden. Such a day of enforced idleness used to be a personal offense to Menteith, but now he was indifferent. If he could no longer see the great picture, nothing else mattered. He lay on his window-seat, and the episode of that morning at the hospital stuck in his mind. Suddenly, it occurred to him that Mrs. Orlibar had come to take her daughter home, as Miss Quilty's people had done. "Far away in Canada," was it not? The thought depressed him unaccountably, and like a response to his moodiness, the rain clouds broke into a drizzling downpour. Bruce groaned wearily and went to sleep.

#### V

"SURE, don't be talking," whispered Ellen Grady to her husband outside the studio door. "'Tis nigh eight o'clock, and he's had no dinner. He do be sick again. Turn the knob."

The janitor knocked and called again. Mrs. Grady intrepidly pushed the door open and snapped a switch close by, flooding the room with the electric light. Menteith sprang from the window-seat.

"Who—what—?" he cried, and then he dropped on the cushion, with his head in his two hands. "Saints in heaven!" he said, in a voice awe-stricken and reverent.

"Are you well tonight, Mr. Menteith?" inquired Ellen. "You're not strong yet, sir, and we suspicioned—"

The artist stood erect and squared his shoulders with a deep breath.

"Strong!" he exclaimed. "Never have I been strong in my life until this night." He pressed his palms against his eyes, as if to retain in them some-

thing which he had seen, and then he flung his velvet jacket across the floor. "Get me a cab, Grady!" he shouted, running to his bedroom.

"But it's stormy, sir, and——"

"Hurry!" roared Menteith happily. "Man alive, did you care for a storm when you were waiting for Ellen's answer, thirty years ago?"

He counted the cross streets as the carriage whirled uptown, but he was not actually impatient. It seemed to him that his future life was now arranged with the certainty and fixed purpose of an unalterable machine: The supernatural character of the discovery did not concern him in the least. The fact was as real as the glistening pavement of the Avenue.

The street entrance of the hospital was open, and Menteith brushed by the door-maid, for he caught a glimpse of a white-haired lady, sitting alone in a narrow reception-room.

"Mrs. Orlibar," he commenced, steadying his voice, "may I speak to you? May I tell you something? Forgive me, if I can't express myself well, but God knows my heart is in every word I say."

The little room was dimly lighted.

"What is it, Mr. Menteith?" she rejoined gently.

"I have come to ask you for Miriam," he said. "To ask you if I may tell her that I love her, if I may beg her to be my wife."

Mrs. Orlibar looked at him, and her lips moved before she spoke.

"This is very strange," she murmured. "Very strange and sudden."

"I have loved her since she saved me from dying here," said Menteith. "I hardly knew it until a few hours ago."

"And you are sure that—that you love my girl?"

Menteith took a step forward.

"I am more than sure," he avowed. "She fills my soul, and——" he broke off timidly. "You will think me

crazy," he admitted, "but if you knew how three times I have seen her face transfigured in a miraculous vision like that of an angel at the gate of life and death, how I have seen it and recognized it only this very afternoon——"

"This afternoon?" cried Mrs. Orlibar softly.

The portières shook apart and Miss Elchester rapidly glided into the room. She stopped short at sight of Bruce, but her evident gladness was not to be restrained, and she laid both arms on Mrs. Orlibar's shoulders.

"The best of news, dear!" said Miss Elchester. "Both of the doctors swear that she is safe—absolutely safe. Van Deusen stakes his reputation on it. Miriam is sleeping now—we can have a peek at her."

She turned to Menteith, while Mrs. Orlibar, her eyes in a mist of happy tears, leaned against the mantel.

"Miriam!" echoed the artist blankly.

"Dr. Van Deusen operated on Miriam today," whispered Miss Elchester. "It was serious—at one time they thought——"

"But she was about, only this morning!" Menteith stammered.

"That's her style," the superintendent said. "Miriam did not wish it known. Marvelous the way she kept up! She had a previous operation—an unsuccessful one—shortly after you left the hospital. While you were at Saranac, I fancy."

"And did you say—I—we could see her?" inquired Mrs. Orlibar.

Miss Elchester shot a smiling, understanding glance from the mother to Bruce, and beckoned them into the hall. Mrs. Orlibar went to Menteith and clasped his hand.

"Miriam loves you dearly," she breathed. "Miriam told me, before the surgeons came. To me it is like a dream."

"It was a dream," said Bruce, "but it is a dream no longer. My angel at the gate is real."

# ASHES OF SAINTS

By Algernon Tassin

**A**FTER having drifted from one New York boarding-house to another with equally unsatisfactory experience, John Rogers had, as he unpacked his books for the fifth time in three years and anxiously inspected their long-suffering bindings, the comfortable sensation that he was settling himself. He had the evidence of eye and ear that here at last was a house irreproachably managed and, after his many wanderings, experienced quite as fully as his friend could have wished the flattered sense of the elect in entering therein; and also a pardonable elation in difficulties overcome. For the ambassadorial services of that lady had succeeded in imparting to him some reverence for her very apparent feeling that to get into Miss Chester's house constituted obligations which few men were worthy to sustain, nevertheless as he happened to be of the sex which alone could contract them, he might after due probation be enrolled among the not ineligible. But chiefly he had seen Miss Chester herself. Although he was surprised to find her somewhat less than thirty years of age—for he had insensibly through his friend's representations been regarding her in the light of an institution—he knew her at once to be capable of making even a New York boarding-house a localized habitation, something to which a man might look forward more palatably than a night-refuge and the transient repository of his locked trunk.

At the precise moment of his arrival she had appeared so magically as to hint that the household had been attending its guest of honor, had

stretched him an unobtrusive hand, and as quietly disappeared. But that instant had sufficed to leave him with an impression of an engaging if neutral smile which routine had not deprived of timidity, a tempered cordiality and a competent nature. In short, that instant had given him a glimpse even on Thirty-eighth street of Beacon Hill, and so in a double sense Rogers felt at home. He found himself at once snatched up from an unsavory vagabondage into a respectability which he hopefully felt might become almost as lasting as his sojourn in the latter locality, where, until his business summoned him to New York, he had dwelt for ten years without once packing up his books. The general impermanence of the metropolitan attitude seemed to the young man to find epitomized expression in the matter of boarding-houses.

All of Miss Chester's lodgers were men and, with his single exception, elderly. This last he suspected might be one of the principles of selection which ruled Miss Chester's supervisors in filling her house for her, and the obstacle to his candidacy which his own friend had allowed him to divine she had in conclave made a special point in overcoming. They were grave, self-absorbed men whom Rogers was aware of individually at breakfast and collectively at dinner. The former meal they regarded only in the light of a strategical necessity, a hurried fortification for the daily dash downtown. Dinner, however, was inclined to be formal almost to tediousness as if to atone by its decorum for the somewhat disorderly function of breakfast.

Then it was that Miss Chester presided in person, with her fragile dignity and her timid yet unflinching affability. Though she sat quietly at the head of her well-furnished table, she nevertheless hovered over it, as it were, with feminine solicitude for the social well-being of her guests, seeking to encourage a spineless conversation and lift it to its feet. Her adroit endeavors to keep it propped and the unconsciousness of his fellow-lodgers to these transparent labors appealed almost pathetically to Rogers, who for his part would much have preferred an easy silence. Often out of regard for her chagrin at the defeat of her efforts to dispel the persistent taciturnity, he would throw himself resignedly into the breach, until he found himself become—somewhat to his distaste—the chief social feature of Miss Chester's table with all the managerial activities of host. Often, when the others proved more than usual adamant to the gentle insistence of her assaults, he found himself conducting a conversation with her alone. At such times he was always surprised to find her comments, on books at least, rather personal; and occasionally a discussion arose which he was amazed to perceive at the end had sustained itself without effort and with some agreeableness.

Beyond taking her for an infrequent drive or concert, Miss Chester's friends seemed to content themselves with a supervision over the vacancies in her household. She rarely, he found, went out in the evenings, for whenever that happened she seemed with the eagerness of a narrowed interest to seize upon it as a topic for table talk, and revealed a pleasant descriptive power in making the most of it. As, however, she reticently withdrew from all chance opportunities for private conversation and could scarcely be prevailed upon to borrow from Rogers a book upon which they might have touched, it was evident that she had no wish to increase the degree of intimacy existing between herself and her lodgers. Rogers made up his mind at last that the effort to keep up a general

conversation was personally unpleasant to her and arose solely from the desire to uphold the traditions of dinner as a social occasion. Once he had fathomed this, she seemed always to be seeking something to say, and her daily effort and her daily failure to inspire a reluctant conversation made her to his mind a wistful figure.

There were other reasons why she appeared so to him. She had a frail, tired prettiness, its gentility heightened by her unvarying black. The lace bands at her neck and wrists gave her an oldish dignity which but for her perfect composure would have seemed a little obvious. The effect to Rogers, who delighted in minor analyses, was of girlhood arrested by responsibilities conscientiously assumed, and still, though punctiliously discharged for many years, not having been readjusted to the unexpected moment of their first taking up. It was almost, he thought, like a masquerade, long turned to earnest, which yet retains the casual grace of its investment. These speculations rather took the young man's fancy. They gave him a pleasant sense of human interest, all the better for making no demands upon him outside of a vaguely romantic friendliness. To feel that at the table he could occasionally rescue her from a trifling embarrassment was not unwelcome, nor was he unsusceptible to the look of quiet gratitude which she turned upon him at such times, after a more than ordinarily futile endeavor to extract conversation from several elderly ruminative men unduly absorbed in the mechanics of eating.

But Miss Chester first took an unofficial shape in his mind on account of a little incident. It happened one day after he had been about three months in the house that someone gave him two tickets for the opera. Not caring to go himself, he asked her if she would oblige him by using them.

She was visibly surprised. "Thank you," she answered in some embarrassment through which her appreciation was very evident. "I—you are very



kind. But I shall not be able to go."

"Aren't you fond of music?" he asked. "I know it is a stupid opera, 'Rigoletto.' But this new tenor is said to be very fine in it."

"'Rigoletto!'" she echoed. "I have not heard it since I was in Europe." She stopped suddenly. For some reason he could not divine her face changed and she resumed her slightly impersonal air.

"I thought perhaps you would ask Miss Reed to go with you," he pursued. "You know I am very grateful to her for sending me here. And she gets out so little."

"Oh!" said Miss Chester, "did you mean—?" She paused again, embarrassed. He saw that she had thought at first that he had been asking her to accompany him. "Why, yes," she said hastily, slightly coloring. "I am sure she will be delighted to go. And so will I," she added, as if fearing she were saying too much, yet wishing to cover up her awkward misapprehension. "Are you sure you are not robbing yourself?"

"No. I have some reading on for tonight which I wouldn't give up for all the operas in the world. Certainly not for that sing-songy 'Rigoletto'!"

At dinner she informed him that Miss Reed had telephoned her delighted acceptance. "This is a great treat you are giving me," she said, seeming to desire to make amends for her previous lack of warmth. "I have not been to the opera for some time. Indeed, I am devoted to it. My mother did not approve of the theatre, but we often went to the opera. So that all my recollections of that kind of life are associated with it."

Shortly before eight o'clock the maid asked him if he would step downstairs to Miss Chester. He left his just opened book without reluctance, thinking that he was again to be made the recipient of her thanks.

Miss Chester stood in the hall in street attire. "I am so sorry," she said quietly. "But is it too late for you to make use of the tickets? Miss

Reed has just telephoned that she is unable to go."

"What a pity!" said Rogers. "But it's not too late for you to get someone else, is it?"

"Yes. I know no one I could ask at this last moment—" She held the tickets out to him almost with abruptness.

"Then," said he promptly, "they must not go to waste. May I not have the pleasure of going with you?"

"No, no!" she said. "Please do not think it necessary to say that. Since you had been so kind as to give them to me, it hardly seemed nice not to explain at once and in person why I could not use them. But I didn't think that—it would seem—" She stopped in confusion.

"Pardon me, but you really want to go. Why should you be deprived of it? And Miss Reed," he added artfully, seeing his point, "will be so distressed to have kept you from going. Won't you let me take you?"

"But—" She broke off, not wishing to finish her sentence. She began another, realizing its inaptness in her increasing embarrassment. "But you have your book, I——"

"Nonsense. My book will be just as good tomorrow. Besides, come to think of it, I should really like to go."

She smiled, conscious of making an unsuccessful attempt at turning the matter lightly. "To that sing-songy 'Rigoletto'?"

"Well, to hear this tenor bellow some of his famous high C's. I shall take it rather unkindly if you do not let me go with you."

Miss Chester paused undecided. But she made up her mind to make the best of it. "You are very good," she said. "I shall be glad if you will take me. Here are the tickets."

He took them from her with a little thrill of intimacy. Upstairs, however, he gazed regretfully at his deserted book. Circumstances had pushed them further than either would willingly have gone. "But really," he reflected as he put on his coat, "it would be too bad to spoil a rare evening for

her. I didn't know it was in her to look so pretty."

The incident of the opera was not repeated. It had taken both of them too far out of accustomed channels, making them conscious of a slight formality in their attempt to conceal the fact. He had perceived this in her, not guessing that it was of course more evident to her in himself and that she had complicated the situation with feminine imagination. She felt humiliated to be upon his hands, to have been the unfortunate means of precipitating upon him a solution which was as natural to him as it was unwelcome to her. For some days it appeared to retard their increasing recognition of each other as interesting and reliable factors of their common world. But in reality it brought them nearer together, for it had made an epoch back of which they could no longer date—one of those minor occasions which somehow become time-markers in the history of an acquaintance and, insignificant or even unfortunate as they seem, form the basis of a private understanding which differentiates the rest of the world. She resolved of course to ignore the presence of such an understanding, and in the resolution made it only the more operative. He, perceiving it an intrusion upon the desirable detachment of his existence and feeling that in pronouncing it such he had sufficiently checked any further encroachment, permitted himself to regard it as a pretty episode in a life where episodes of all kinds were happily infrequent, the prettiness of which lay in its being undisturbed by repetition.

At the table the little tragi-comedy of the ever-renewed attempt at general conversation played itself daily with all its pathetic and humorous futilities. But since their coming together he had begun to comprehend that it had a larger meaning for her than forcing five inarticulate men into a social attitude. He now sympathetically divined that for some reason it was the chief undertaking of her day, in the success or failure of which she was intimately concerned; and he invested her accord-

ingly with that accession of interest toward its object which a subtle and exclusive perception bestows upon its complimented possessor. He could not imagine her desirous of becoming the centre of her world; her air of impersonal contact, if not deliberate, was at least thoroughly native. Nor did she appear to be seeking a feminine satisfaction in displaying social graces in however small a field, or in acquiring them out of response to that inner aimless demand which so often inspires feminine endeavor. He could not make it out; it engaged his imagination and all the resources of his analysis. He felt himself artistically involved in discovering its bearing—as in the detection of an elusive meaning in a book, the language of which is clear but the purport of which seems larger than the occasion affords.

It was at the beginning of a blustering April when Rogers, seeking philanthropically for some remark at the table, hit upon one which changed not only the conversation but the course of events. "Think of it!" said he. "I have a friend who will be out of all this cold in a week or so and forgetting that weather exists. Seems strange, doesn't it?"

She turned to him brightly. "Where is he going?"

"To Italy by the Mediterranean."

"To Italy!" Her eyes started for a moment and her lips parted slightly.

"Yes. He will be hearing the nightingale before our sparrows are thawed out."

"I heard one, once," she said, seeming to seize upon an easier topic, so eagerly that her words had almost the effect of coming at random. "It was a thick, low note, the most beautiful I had ever heard. But when my friend told me it was a nightingale I was disappointed."

He smiled. "Our own private nightingales sing so much better, don't they! Where was it?"

She paused a moment. When she answered finally he could not have told what her voice was significant of; it was carefully in conversational key,

yet it seemed to reveal something. "In Rome."

"In Rome! My friend is spending the month there and then leaves Italy for Paris. You must tell me where in Rome. The chase of the nightingale is becoming a serious pursuit with tourists nowadays, they tell me. Where did you hear it?"

"In the Passage Margherita."

"I must tell him about it. Perhaps he can come across the same bird."

She smiled pensively. "It was more of a garden then than it is now, I believe. That was a long time ago, over ten years. Perhaps he, too, will be disappointed. Or is he the sort of man to have been making his own nightingales—your friend?"

Rogers laughed. "Yes, and decidedly no. As practical as they come, but not above a private bird-cage by a long shot. Besides, Italy will be in his head by that time. In the Spring there's something in the smell of it, when"—he lowered his voice humorously—"you feel yourself at liberty to risk the smell of anything. Yes, he's a compound, Arlington! One never knows what stratum will be on top. But a fine, considerate man!"

She took him up. "Considerate? That's an unusual word to single out from so many general ones. Did you do it purposely? Considerate of what?"

Rogers thought for a moment. "Oh, of the belongings of other people. Their rights to things—ideas, prejudices, and so forth."

Miss Chester closed her eyes suddenly as if to hide something in them. But they were quite unchanged when she raised their lids again. "That is nice," she said slowly. "So few people understand—about others."

The next day she came out of the parlor as he was coming in from business. "Do you mind?" she asked. "I want to speak to you." She moved back into the room. "This friend of yours—the one going abroad, I mean. When—when does he sail?"

"Day after tomorrow."

"Do you—you will think it queer. But do you know him well enough to

ask him a slight favor? And to trust him with it?"

Rogers, though curious at her tone, deferred to her controlled embarrassment. "Why, yes," said he, in a matter-of-fact way. "With one of my own. And I should be easy in asking him to do anything for you if you would care to have me. Any little thing I mean, of course. I think he would be glad to do it."

"Thank you. It is only a little thing. Or rather it will not take much of his time or demand anything of him. If he has never been in Rome before, he will probably be going there, anyway. Unless he is on business merely? In that case I should not like to ask him."

"No, his business is in Paris. He is only going over by way of Italy and the Spring. He will be doing things, of course, and if he can be of service to you he will be glad. Shall I have him here to see me?"

"Oh, no!" she answered quickly. "That is, he will be busy, of course, sailing so soon. If you will kindly tell him the circumstances—my asking you, I mean. And tell him not to open this until he is in Rome." She indicated a small packet in her hand, but withheld it a moment. "That sounds odd, doesn't it? But it is rather un-American and all that. He will understand it better over there, where people do things for ideas." She smiled jerkily at the implication of her words. "It is nothing like a romantic tribute or that sort of thing."

Thinking to put her more at ease he answered pleasantly, "I'm glad you are not sending over a flower to be laid upon Keats's grave."

"No," she said, with unexpected soberness. She put the packet suddenly into his hand. "Please take it. It must go and I have no other way to send it. I—I hope I sha'n't be a nuisance to either of you."

"I can answer for both; I shall see him tomorrow morning," said Rogers cordially, and discerning a sort of finality in her silent thanks, he went upstairs.

That night at dinner he felt that

another subtle understanding had been forged between them. Indeed, the young man perceived for the first time a rather disturbing sense of their secret alliance. He talked superficially of anything that came into his head; her replies—when a reply seemed unavoidable—were monosyllabic. Otherwise she sat silent and contained through the entire meal. He perceived at once that she desired no allusion to what had passed between them, and though he had neither intended nor desired one, he had an unaccountable sense of disappointment that a colloquy so unusual had not been more productive.

During the first part of May he saw that Miss Chester was beginning to count upon hearing something, either from himself or directly from his friend, about her commission. Several times she seemed on the point of speaking, then, seeming not to know how to say what was in her mind, she turned to something else.

Her expectancy heightened as the days wore on. About the middle of May Rogers, wroth at his friend, was contemplating prodding him up on the matter, when a letter arrived from Arlington in Paris.

It was as follows:

DEAR ROGERS:

I don't know what to say or do about your friend Miss Chester's commission. I really feel very humble about it and somewhat as if, through no fault of mine, I had been let in, grimy from the street, upon an inner sanctuary. I don't know whether you know about it or not, so to prevent misunderstanding I will go back to the beginning (though if you don't, I feel rather offensive in telling even you). I opened the letter and little packet in Rome as instructed. The letter moved me very much, though it sickened me a bit.

It seems that about ten years or so ago Miss Chester, then a young girl, and her mother were in Rome. Among the usual things they went to the Catacombs of St. Agnes, then rather newly opened. The guide, a somewhat impressive monk, showed them a tomb where some virgin martyrs had mouldered away, and expecting doubtless a liberal tip (benefaction, I mean—"for the church, of course"—you remember the phrase), had with much show of solemnity and of doing an unusual thing scooped up a few ashes and presented them to Mrs.

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Chester. She was rather overcome at the deed, but being a very religious woman and feeling, no doubt—for she had an active imagination, as you shall see—that the possession of them conferred upon her some special distinction, she allowed herself to take them before she fully understood the import of doing so. All the rest of her life—you know the New England type—she was troubled by the impiety of the act, and made several unsuccessful attempts to restore the pinch of sacred dust. Miss Chester received the ashes as her mother's last bequest, and beginning to despair of ever being able to restore them with her own hand, she took advantage of the opportunity to ask me to do it. I cannot tell you, Rogers, the simple, appealing, well-bred way in which all of this was written; nothing sloppy at all, just a low note of suffering. I felt like a rough fool in a woman's hospital. She ended by asking me not to laugh. Think of it! Of course I did laugh a bit, but it was half-crying.

Well, after I had been in Rome two weeks I set the day for the Catacombs of St. Agnes. But I didn't go—a telegram the night before took me out of town at once. And so I left without executing for Miss Chester her mother's expiation. It may seem strange to you, but I felt horribly guilty about it. Once in Paris, however, and in an atmosphere of business, I reviewed the affair more calmly. I had not betrayed my trust; I intended to go, and I think, when the time came (she described to me the location of the tomb with great exactness together with the story of the martyrs—"I suppose the guide still tells the story," she wrote simply. As if he would forget it!) I would have deposited the dust as dutifully and piously as would the dear woman herself, not for the sake of those old martyrs, whom I can't understand (they did rush into things, you know!), but for that new one, martyred for their sake, whom in a rough way I understand very well indeed. Then, too, I actually realize somewhat how she felt. I had the same sensation of awe in the crypt of the little chapel erected over the spot where Peter is said to have been crucified, when the custodian, a rather snuffy person, stuck through a grating in the floor a long stick with a tin cup on the end of it and hauled up some dirt which he presented to me solemnly. Indeed, it never occurred to me until that afternoon that they would have to dump in a new cartload every month or so to keep up the supply. That all at once set me thinking on the ways of custodians in general. As an upshot I analyzed a little pinch of these momentous ashes of the saints. And—of course you see it—they were just common dirt, indeed a bit worse than that, with a few cinders ground up in it in order to look less like the ordinary article.

This is my story. But there is a sequel. After finding this out I don't know whether

I felt better or worse; I think it was worse. It's bad enough for the Puritan conscience to fret over anything so remote as a pinch of ashes of a Roman martyr. But to have them turn out common dirt hits off the futility of things in a horribly poignant way. It's damnably and humiliatingly human, I think. Romantic, of course! Nevertheless, I put the whole matter up to you. I simply can't write that girl that the long remorse of her mother and her own five years' sacred charge turns out in the end to have been bathos. The thing got on my nerves so, that, torn between the mushy and the practical side of my nature, I ended by doing a really ghoulish thing. I flung the ashes of the virgin martyrs into the Seine. Wasn't that sottish of me! I don't try to palliate it. My only explanation is that I had a sudden overmastering revolt against the cruelty of the passionate New England conscience—you know I know something about all that. Well, there's the story. Do as you think best about it. But get out of yourself a bit and look at it from her side, and for God's sake do it decently.

Yours,

W. ARLINGTON.

You needn't trouble to whitewash me. But lie about the whole thing if you think it will keep her from feeling badly.

Rogers got up and walked about the room. He discovered that the door had been ajar while he was reading the letter, and closed it with a start. Then he laughed at himself for doing so. But the act crystallized for him the hitherto scattered significance of his relation toward the disclosure to Miss Chester. What should he do about it? He felt that it would be brutal to tell her the truth. Yet he, too, had Puritan tendencies; they made him prefer on the whole not to lie; at the same time, however, they impelled him to divine what might be the consequences of the truth upon a nature like hers. His own Puritan strain, which had long ago played itself out in the heart though not in the head, showed him what a solitary, reticent and sensitive girl with a vocation for reverence might suffer from the revelations of this letter. But after all she might be relieved to know there was an end to the whole matter. Yet there was her attitude toward her mother to think of. She might be strangely affected by the knowledge that all her mother's remorse had been unnecessary and even ridiculous.

Crude revelations of this sort sometimes reacted queerly upon sensitive natures. He devoutly wished he had never heard of the wretched affair. Why not tell her simply that Arlington had done as she asked, leaving her to infer that he himself knew nothing? But she would always be troubled with the suspicion that Arlington had undertaken the mission in a spirit of levity, would be always wondering just how he had received the letter. Her letter—why in the world hadn't Arlington told him more about it? Of course he knew it was simple, appealing and well-bred—as if it could be anything else! But there might have been something in the letter which made it impossible for a decent man not to answer it personally; and consequently, since he had not done so, she would suspect that he had dismissed the affair flippantly and her humiliation would be intense. Clearly, Arlington was a blundering ass! And what in the world did he mean by his impertinent admonition to get out of himself and look at it as she would? That was a fine thing for Arlington to say, who had, after all, done a rather brutal thing, and certainly something entirely beyond his province. It occurred to him that of the two he was far more likely to consider her feelings. In fact, come to think of it, ever since he had been in the house that had been his instinctive attitude. Indeed, in this respect he had been if anything over-generous; it had broken in on his habits considerably and interfered with his reading, and all to be considerate and tactful in his treatment of her. Nevertheless here was Arlington complicating their relations terribly, and then fancying that he could see better than another that very tender feelings might be involved. Poor girl, how would she take it? But the point was what was he to do about it? He must make up his mind. But he would sleep on it at least; she had waited so long she could wait a day longer.

He went down to dinner, having come no nearer to a decision. Indeed, he had not been able to summon his

mind to dwell upon the necessity of making one. Rather he was feeling resentful that anything had come to disturb their pleasant and unexact friendliness, a thing, indeed, which might mar it altogether if fate should be capricious. He suddenly realized that this would mean a great deal to him. At any rate, aside from considerations of the future, he resented the need for duplicity on his part, for pretending that his knowledge of her today differed in no wise from his knowledge of yesterday. He regretted now that he had not obeyed his first instinct to absent himself until he had come to a decision. However, although this divided mind showed in the formality of his behavior throughout dinner, and he was conscious of its showing, he discerned nothing on her part to indicate any cognizance of the fact.

He was consequently amazed when, detaining him in a natural manner after the others had gone, she turned to him with suppressed eagerness.

"Well?" she queried.

"Well," he answered pretending to miss her meaning.

"I could not, of course, help but see that the letter lying on the hall table for you was from Paris. You must pardon me. Was it from Mr. Arlington?"

"Yes," he assented. She waited. He felt the silence growing awkward and knew that if he did not speak, the pause itself would nevertheless commit him to something. "We cannot talk very well here. Shall we not go to the parlor?"

She gave him a startled look and led the way at once. In the moment he had thus gained, however, all he could think of was how simple, appealing and well-bred she looked—in Arlington's ridiculous phrase.

In the long parlor one jet was burning dimly. Ordinarily she would have turned it up at once, but now it did not seem to occur to her. This trivial indication of the absorption of her mind affected him greatly. Poor little girl, he thought again, how simple, appeal-

ing— But she was once more facing him questioningly, waiting for him to speak.

"Yes," he repeated slowly. "The letter was from Arlington. Before I tell you about it, do you mind my asking you something?"

She paused before replying, as if she were frightenedly running over in her mind every contingency. "What is it?" she asked at last.

"Would you mind telling me as much as you told Arlington about—the nature of your commission? I'm afraid I can't understand his letter very well until you do." He felt that this was despicable, that he was extorting her confidence under a false pretense. "At least," he amended, "I should be glad and proud if you would confide in me so far." She was still standing motionless, seeming to be trying to understand the turn the affair had taken. He could not bear to see her so, her white face projected from the surrounding gloom as if it were stiff and rigid instead of the soft outline it really had. "Please sit down, won't you?" he said tenderly.

She moved to a chair. "Will you tell me how much you know?" in a moment she asked quietly.

"Only a little. Will you—do you mind," he added gently, "telling me all about it?"

She began simply. The ready confidence in one of so reticent a habit touched him keenly. Yet, after all, he was aware that she was acting in the way he had expected. To him the whole situation was new; the slight girlish figure in the darkened room—the grave, embarrassed voice—the personal confession: all these elements were novel to his experience, yet they had an air of familiarity. Though it seemed to him he was giving her his entire attention, side by side with her words kept running a parallel comment in his mind upon the effect of her words upon himself. He would have ascribed it to the habit of critical detachment which his books had engendered in him, but he knew at the time that he was not detached, that he was vividly con-



cerned in her recital. It was rather as if two recitals were going on at once, each contributory and complementary, but each independent.

"My mother and I," began Miss Chester, "were in Rome ten years ago. I was then at boarding-school, and it was the Summer vacation. The monk who took us through the Catacombs told us a story of some virgin martyrs whose mangled bodies had been collected at night and put into the tomb by which we were standing. The story and the circumstances—the blackness, the earthy air, the tiny taper making a little group of life in the midst of all that death, the gown of the monk with its rope girdle catching the thin flare of light while his face was lost in the dark—all these affected both of us strangely, and my mother even more than myself. At the conclusion of the story he stooped down and taking in the hollow of his palm some dust from the tomb which was said to have only recently been opened, he gave it to my mother. 'I see,' said he, 'that you are deeply moved.' These ashes will be sanctified to you.' She, awed, I think, as I was, held her pocket-book open and the ashes ran in a little stream from his hand into the book. When we got into the upper air my mother, a rather strong woman, fainted, with relief to be out among the things of life once more.

"Neither of us spoke of the occurrence again. At the end of that year my father died, and my mother found she would have to support herself and me. She insisted upon my remaining at school, however, and I never suspected the sacrifices she was forced to make to keep me there. The next Summer when I came home I found her much changed. Contact with the world—she had always led a sheltered life—had worn her sadly. Though she had a methodical, energetic nature, she was at heart, I think, a dreamer with a touch of fire in her. She was, as I see her now"—Rogers, leaning forward intently in the dim light heard her voice colored with a fleeting pathetic smile which stirred him more

deeply than a sob—"the sort of woman who, had she lived in another time, might have, herself, become a martyr gladly. I had known this in a vague way all along, but I was totally unprepared for what she had to tell me on the day of my arrival home. She had, she said, an alternative to put to me. Would I return to school the following year—my last—or would I allow her to use the money to take us both abroad again that Summer, at once? She could not rest until she had restored with her own hand the ashes which she had brought away from that grave. She impressed upon me, however, the gravity of my decision. She felt that if we went she would be committing a crime to deprive me of my schooling, but that it would be to expiate a greater crime. She besought me to take upon myself the responsibility of my choice. As for herself, she was worn out with thinking upon the subject, and of the consequences to her own conscience in going or in staying. She had concluded that I must decide. I did so quickly. By the next steamer we sailed for Rome.

"There, my mother, who had been in a state of spiritual exaltation all the journey—which showed how unaccountably, to me at least, at the time, she had brooded over what she deemed her sacrilege—there, in Rome, my mother fell ill. Finally, as our return passage had already been booked and the time was getting short, she insisted, weak as she was, upon the fulfillment of our mission. We drove to the Catacombs, secured a brother to act as our guide, and, lighting our tapers, threaded the passages. Say what we could, however, we could not keep the monk from droning over all his familiar repertory of death. I began to feel the same sensations creeping over me again, and so, doubtless, did my mother. Whether it was this, or the air, or the shock of being there once more—so near to her expiation—her weakened condition overcame her. She swooned, and, with the help of a party whose tapers we saw in the distance, was with difficulty carried

through the narrow galleries into the air and light again. She did not really recover for some days, and not until we were on our homeward voyage did she fully realize her surroundings.

"Then the recognition of her failure settled into a despair which frightened me. Arrived at home, I concluded to treat our going abroad again as an understood thing. This attitude somewhat revived my mother, and for a year we bent all our energies toward it. But she never rallied from the nervous shock she received that day, and from the vital exhaustion which followed the realization that the purpose which had consumed her so long, and to which—as she continued to feel—she had sacrificed me, had been defeated at the last moment by her own weakness."

Miss Chester paused and sat silently pressing her hands together in her lap. To Rogers they made a spot of white on the blackness of her gown. So necessitous and intense had been his response to her, and the emotions which her own had enkindled in him, that he, too, felt the need of a pause. Her voice had gripped him until, now that it ceased at last, another moment would, he thought, have been intolerable. When he had leaned toward her he felt her dress touching him; it seemed to him that he was touching the garments of a soul. He did not know whether this nearness, or her voice or the perception of his own emotions, thrilled him the most.

Miss Chester went on: "The following Summer she died. Her death was hastened by the knowledge that it would be some years at the rate we were able to lay by—for we had had serious reverses—before we could go abroad once more. On her death-bed she gave me the little packet of ashes with the solemn charge that I myself should replace them. I lived very close to my mother in the last two years of her life, and I know, though she spoke of it but seldom, what it meant to her. In that way—will you think me disloyal if I say so?—it does not mean so much to me. But to carry out her desire, a desire which really burned her

life away, means almost as much, I think. To replace those ashes with my own hand, as she bade me, dying, has been my chief wish in life.

"I do not want you to get the idea that all this was really characteristic of my mother. She was neither hysterical nor overwrought. On the contrary, she was a woman of great sense and practical insight. She had to begin to support herself and me late in life, and where most women, I think, might have been bewildered, she kept in all other things her sense of proportion. Even now I am profiting by her wise advice, an instance of which—for the purpose of showing her to you in another light—I may venture to tell you. Her main idea was not to lose or let me lose our place. 'I have seen,' she said, 'many women who were forced to throw open their homes in order to support themselves. They all let down; and it came largely, I believe, from their ceasing to regard themselves as responsible for the social life of their houses, especially their tables. Always'—she said to me—'think of yourself as hostess to guests, and you will remain true to the traditions in which you were reared.' I have tried to do so, though with poor success, greatly due, no doubt, to my distaste for it. But I have always considered it one of the few offerings I could make to the memory of my mother—now that in all probability I shall never be able to carry out with my own hands her dying charge. Twice I have sent the packet over, when I realized at last that I could not go myself. But each time I was unsuccessful. The other bearers were women of my acquaintance—women who have been most kind in keeping my house filled for me. One forgot all about it; the other decided when she got there that it was a morbid idea which should not be indulged, and on her return tried to laugh me out of it. I—I hoped I might be more successful with a man."

Her voice broke at last and she stopped quietly, her struggling breath just audible in the darkness.

Rogers, who sat where the dim light

from the one burner reached him in the long room, had been increasingly and indescribably moved by this recital. As she was in the shadow of the open door he could not see her face, but the low voice unhesitatingly continuing its story in spite of the emotions which often contested its utterance—registering in the darkness the feelings of the speaker as she resolutely tore aside the veil of habitual reserve—made an effect upon him even more powerful. It was an effect which he had never before received from a human being, or even from books celebrated for their intimate self-revelation. He longed to comfort her, though to offer comfort would have seemed to him crudely brutal. He kept silent, amazed at the emotions which made a new and unheard-of tumult in his orderly breast! Each accent of her frugal voice stirred him. He was aware that a mercurial appreciation of some new fact was pervading his nature. It flooded him with a warmth of sympathy, of humaneness which, he understood at once, although its existence had been hitherto unknown to him, was part of a universal life which he had never seemed to touch before.

At last she broke the silence. "Will you not tell me what Mr. Arlington had to say? Please be—be quite frank with me." The break in her voice told him poignantly that she was nerving herself for his still withheld disclosure.

"I am sorry," said he slowly, "that Arlington was unexpectedly summoned away from Rome before he had time to do what you asked. He felt that to write to you would be cruel. He wanted me to tell you."

She rose. "So the packet comes back to me again!" After a moment she added wearily, "There seems a fatality about it, doesn't there? From the very beginning."

He had risen also and now took her hand with an impulse which an hour ago would have seemed foreign to him. He held it in both of his. "Thank you," she said brokenly, with more agitation than she had at any time shown. "Thank you—for telling me."

The next afternoon he brought to her a sealed envelope. "Here are the ashes," he said. "Arlington probably found it safer to enclose them in this."

"I have troubled you to no purpose," she said listlessly. "At least only to this one. I think I shall not try again."

"Yes," he answered. "I know another man who is going to Europe."

She shook her head with a wan smile.

"Yes. I am going to Europe."

"You?" Her voice faltered.

"I am going this week if—" He broke off. "Will you not trust this to me?"

"But—but—" Her realization found words at last. "You are going on my account?"

"Yes," he said, "on your account." He smiled. "Do you know, I don't know your name?"

Her lips were trembling, but she smiled bravely back at him. "Elizabeth."

"I want you—Elizabeth—to trust me with something else. Something I have just found out is more precious to me than this is to you." She looked bewildered and then dropped her steady eyes. "I mean—won't you go with me? Let us re-entomb these ashes together, you and I, and begin a new life, without the ghosts of any martyrs to trouble us."

He drew her into the parlor and closed the door.

Rogers found it necessary to make some explanation to the other lodgers for turning them out so suddenly into a homeless world. He felt a deep sympathy for them all, for he knew they would never be so comfortable again.

The warmth of this sympathy diffused itself over the entire table and almost with garrulity they wished the unexpected couple joy. Miss Reed, delightfully busied in making her friend so hastily ready, confessed herself not altogether unanticipative of the result. It had crossed her mind,

she said, from the first. They were very quietly married with only herself for witness. The most impervious of the lodgers, an unimaginative person whose simple devotion to the more obvious duties of the table had caused Miss Chester her greatest solicitude, revealed a tender vein unsuspected by anyone. He presented her with

a bride-book, done fabulously in white vellum with gold and illuminated script, in which on appropriate pages were to be enshrined the voluminous details of the entire ceremony; and though no one had ever heard him go beyond two words before, he said very paternally out of an impassive face, "God bless you, my children!"



## THE REAL FRIENDS

By George Fitch

CALL him my friend who seeks me in my den  
     For quiet chats which light the weary day;  
 Call him twice friend who knows exactly when  
     To go away.

Call him my friend whose voice is always free  
     In my defense when critics' words are rough;  
 Call him twice friend who understands when he  
     Has said enough.

Call him my friend who comes, in smiling faith,  
     For my assistance when the clouds are black.  
 Call him thrice friend—though he is but a wraith—  
     Who pays me back!



## 'WAY UP IN MAINE

"WELL, no," said the cross-roads storekeeper up in the Androscoggin-skigginmemphremagogkattawampus region, "I ain't got them articles in stock at present, but I guess yew can find the olive ile at the post-office and the canned tomaters at the barber-shop. So yew shot a moose, did yew? Well, that's reel fine, but I kind o' hoped if yew was goin' to have an accident yew'd shoot Hen Pussley, yewr guide. I ain't vindictive, or anything of the kind, but he's been owin' me five shillin's for I d'know how long, and I kind o' think I c'u'd c'lect it easier out o' his estate than I can out o' Hen."

# CONCOURS

By Annie Nathan Meyer

JESSE MAITLAND, in his picturesque and somewhat defiant career, had reached that stage of disgust and ennui which often goes under the name of "change of heart." Since both lead to the same end, why quarrel over a name? However his case be diagnosed, it was certain that he suddenly acquired an entirely new and surprising interest in his little sister's girl friends.

When, on one of his sister's "days," he unexpectedly put in an appearance, handsome, tall, correct—a wolf suddenly appearing in the centre of a sheepfold could scarcely have produced a greater if more evident flutter. In a trice a circle of giggling young misses, innocently spoiling their appetites with chocolate éclairs, were thrown into an agonized struggle to maintain a proper demeanor of unsophistication. Even his sister seemed scarcely at her ease. A couple seated apart from the others in a corner flushed warmly behind their veils; they had been caught in the very act of discussing him.

"Isn't it too horrid," one had been saying in a confidential undertone, "to think of his devotion to that woman" (mentioning the reigning opera-bouffe singer of the day), "and that he can never be persuaded to come near any of us—not even Tessie's best friends."

"And did you ever see such ropes and ropes of pearls as she wears?" asked the other.

"And the sables, when it isn't her ermines!"

"And the stunning turnouts!"

"And that perfect gem of a cottage on the shore road last Summer!"

And a sigh emanated from both. It may have been the sigh that conscious rectitude wafts over flagrant sin—or it may have been something else.

"Well, anyway," burst out the first speaker, "I declare I don't envy her the pearls or the turnouts, or anything else so much as just him. He's simply too divinely handsome for anything."

"Just think, Bess, of having that mouth smile at you every morning across the breakfast-table!" her friend had exclaimed ecstatically.

And then he had come in.

He threw himself down easily on the small sofa alongside of timid little Elsie Dinsmade, thereby throwing her poor little heart into a terrible flutter. What could she do? She was only a "bud" of that very season's opening, but even she knew that it would look too marked to rise with a cup of obviously untasted chocolate in her hand. And, besides, was not the first article of a young girl's creed—Not to Know Anything?

So she welcomed him prettily, and was glad she had on her becoming dark blue velvet with the chinchilla collar. He had the most glorious eyes, the kind that girls usually know only through the medium of the opera-glass. His deep, rich voice had a fascinating melodiousness that made her catch herself every now and then with a little start, wondering what it had said, so taken up had she been solely with its rise and fall.

And that was the first step. Jesse Maitland actually asked permission to escort her home, and when they reached the door she found herself, to

her own surprise, granting him permission to call upon her.

As time went on, and his devotion to Elsie Dinsmade became perfectly obvious, their friends were thrown into a ferment, wondering what on earth Jesse Maitland could see in that quiet, timid little thing. The indiscriminating public made the grievous error of thinking that because a man has paid assiduous court in the past to the hollyhock and the peony, he must of necessity always continue to pass by the modest wood violet. But what poor judges of—horticulture—these good people were. The truth was that this particular bouquet gatherer had fairly sickened to death of the great, showy, heavily scented flowers, and that his overwrought senses were just ready to rest themselves in the delicate little blossom of the shaded woods.

There was no question about it, society was simply astounded. Had it ever contemplated the possible rehabilitation of Jesse Maitland, it would have selected some bold and dashing beauty to have been the *Dea ex machina*—Miss Darlington, who imitated Carmencita so cleverly, or Miss Trail, who sang such tantalizing little French songs, Miss Daisy Grey, who had all London at her feet, before she attempted New York—there were any number of them. But Elsie Dinsmade! a pale, slight girl, who looked as if a strong breeze would waft her away, whose face was so delicately chiseled that it had actually to be studied before its charm could be found, a girl who spoke in a low, quiet voice, with a suggestion of a tremolo in it, a timid little beginner with no aplomb, with barely what might be called complete self-possession! Well, what would come next!

But society failed to realize the elemental fact that when a man wants a change he wants—a change. These brilliant and clever creatures who know so well how to keep just inside of a very fine line, these skaters on very thin ice—there is always, after all, something rather pathetic in their little attempts, because, when all is said and

done, they can be only the real thing considerably diluted. And when a man has become heartily satiated with the real thing there can scarcely be found much charm or excitement in a faint, spiritless reproduction of it.

The courtship was progressing admirably. To be sure, there was lacking a certain zest—that which comes with the chase (for he really could not pretend she was indifferent), but then he was rather accustomed to doing without that, for even in less conventional circles an income of two hundred thousand dollars imposes itself with a certain authority upon the feminine imagination. But there was a distinct zest in the novelty of association with this dainty, innocent, exquisite bit of femininity. Her big, blue eyes, with the pathetic little circles under them, accentuating her general air of frailty, her tiny, white, unassertive chin, her wee, tipped-up nose, her babyish skin drawn a bit tightly over the temples, throwing into high relief the prominent blue veins, her high, thin little voice with its tremolo—all were part of her indefinable purity, which, coupled with a certain dainty *helplessness*, completely charmed him. When he was with her he breathed deep of the pure air that surrounded her. He was as a man who leaves the stale atmosphere of the theatre behind him and drinks in eagerly the cold night air in the streets. The curtain had fallen on the fourth act—he assured himself, and henceforth he would go out with her under the night stars. How precious her appealing helplessness was to him. Little tender thing, how careful he would be to shield and protect her! He almost disliked to think of the possible change that might come in making her his wife. He thought at times it would be pleasant to continue forever on this high spiritual plane of worship—into which so little entered of the world, the flesh and the devil. He had never before associated with women in precisely the same way, and how ready, how completely ready, he was to appreciate it. To be sure, there had been his mother and his sisters, but



that, of course, had, again, been different. He really thought he had discovered just the good, pure, sweet little woman he wanted to make his wife. And the sad part of it was that he really had, and he was making no mistake at all, and my story might have gone very well, very well indeed, and might have ended in the clanging of wedding bells, but for a certain conversation which took place between two of Elsie's bosom friends, and which, unhappily, was overheard by her. It was horribly illuminating. By which I don't mean to imply that any part of his life was revealed that caused the little maid to draw back. Oh, that is not what happened at all. Quite the contrary, in fact. She was a very sensible and a very modern little maid, and if her parents were satisfied that Jesse Maitland would make her a good and devoted husband, what was there to bother her poor little head about? Didn't everyone say she was doing mighty well to catch Jesse Maitland, and was there one of her chums who wouldn't stand in her shoes if she could? Might it not be a certain satisfaction to Virtue to rescue such a princely fortune for the good of society? Think of the manner in which it had been squandered in the past, and think of the way in which it might be spent in the future. But although Elsie was not averse to having her share in disposing of it, she did really care much more about her share of the black eyes and the sensitive mouth, and the melodious voice, so she was a pretty nice little girl in her own way, after all.

But these friends of hers, when she came up from behind at an afternoon tea, happened to be discussing the wonderful change that had come over Jesse Maitland.

"To think he should choose Elsie Dinsmade, of all girls!" exclaimed one. "Do you think she's pretty?"

"Oh, it's obvious he's only amusing himself," cried the other, "seeing she wears on her sleeve just the kind of a brittle heart men like that love to break."

"Of course it would take more spicy

charms to hold him," echoed her friend. "We all know the kind of woman he admires."

"Well, he's taken the world pretty freely into his confidence," was the laughing reply.

Only that, but it rankled terribly. Elsie pretended not to have heard, but from across the room a mirror flung a mocking image of herself full in her face. Of course he was only amusing himself. Everyone knew it—that is, everyone but her. Well, whatever happened, she must keep down those tears. It was all very well to permit them to swell her bosom and rise up and nearly choke her aching throat, but at whatever cost those girls must not see her crying. Deep down in her sad little heart she felt that they were quite right. Certain rather lurid stories of Jesse's career traveled shrinkingly through her mind. Capping it all came a vision of that actress the last time she had seen her glide by in her smart victoria—insolent, splendid, radiant. She stamped her foot at the image of herself over there. She moved slightly to shut it away from her.

How different, how immeasurably different it was from that magnificent creature leaning back on her cushions. Alas, that some wise person was not present to whisper, "Be just as different as you can. Therein lies your very charm." But our guardian angels have a bad habit of being off duty at the most critical moments. Her lips trembled. How helpless and dejected she felt! For the first time she disdained her own charms. How completely inadequate they seemed to her task! She closed her eyes and the woman's face smiled down on her from the secure height of possession. She felt as if a door had been suddenly slammed in her face. She clenched her teeth, and wrung her hands inside her muff. She wouldn't give up without a struggle. He was certainly attracted, at least a little, toward her; at least enough to want to be amused, if nothing more, and that was something. They would see—those girls

who thought they knew everything—they would see.

That very night he noticed a change—at first it was too subtle to have labeled it had he tried. Not long after there was a note in her costume that jarred upon him. They continued to meet nearly every evening, he having found that in his case a mere willingness to accept hospitality had been quite sufficient, an "open sesame." He continued to single her out for his attentions, but he took to studying her more, to observing her with a puzzled and silent inquiry—she seemed less easily analyzable than before, less simple, less direct. She pleaded to be excused from dancing, and led him off into inaccessible corners, and the deep embrasures of heavily draped windows. There was a certain new freedom—just a suggestion of abandon—in certain poses. Over the tone of their conversation there was thrown the same strange, indefinable change. He began to lose the sense of outdoor atmosphere about her; little by little he became conscious of an appeal to that part of his nature which for the past few weeks had lain dormant. It stirred him uneasily. Had he been less in earnest, it might only have amused him. He might even have been tempted to see how far it would go. But he had very definitely resolved to pluck this little woodland blossom for himself—and lo, behold! even as he stretched forth his hand, the violet took on the petals of the peony. There was a mystery in it all that gave him pause. And as he drew back, what more natural than that she, thinking of what those friends had said, should—metaphorically—lean forward?

One evening, about three weeks after the episode of the overheard conversation, he paid a call upon her, and she began to discuss a certain much-talked-of play. She had really been very much disgusted by its coarse realism, but she thought it became the

part she was playing to pretend she had really enjoyed it. It was not at all a play he cared to discuss with her. But she would not have the topic changed, and finally they were in a heated argument over certain problems that were suggested by the play. It was really exceedingly disagreeable to him. To recall, in her parlor, in her presence, certain lurid scenes was utterly distasteful to him. Suddenly, as she leaned forward, about to interrupt him, she made a certain little shrug, which disconcerted him as much as if he had received a slap in the face. He sprang up and pretended to examine a bit of bric-à-brac on the mantel. He answered her in rude monosyllables. He did not wish to be reminded of the past. Why should she? What possible resemblance could there be between those two? What could they have in common? It would be nothing less than horrible to find in your own wife the power to evoke the ghost of the past.

He held out his hand, calmly, resolutely, although he was trembling. He said good-bye; he meant it should be a very real good-bye. How could he possibly know of those terrible heart-aching afternoons spent at the theatre, studying that other woman, observing her very look, her carriage, her gestures, trying, ah, trying so hard to read her charm, her fascination, to wrest it from her and with it win him? How could he possibly know?

He knew only that he flung himself out into the night miserably disillusioned, unhappy. On the curb he stopped to light a cigarette, before hailing a hansom.

He drove on, free as to the future, and yet conscious that in some subtle way he was bound closer than ever to the past.

And she? She held her little head high, and even managed before very long to smile upon a once-rejected lover. It was a wan little smile at best—but it answered.



# A NEW FIELD

By Harold Eyre

THE humorist laid down his pen in despair; hours of striving and not a line to show for it.

For weeks he had not even attempted to write—not since the falling of the blow which had banished the sun from his sky and draped the heavens in black clouds of grief. Now that the prosaic but urgent necessity of paying the rent of his room and providing himself with food impelled him to an effort at composition, his mind refused to respond. His old facility was missing; the knack of seizing the comic point of view, of perceiving at a glance the humorous aspect of life, the power to make the world laugh at its own sorrows—all this had left him. For the first time since, years ago, he had left a commercial position with a comfortable weekly salary to embark upon literary seas for the illusive coast of Bohemia, his pen had gone back on him.

For though his improvident habits and complete disregard for the future had always precluded a bank account, there had never before been a time when he could not satisfy the financial needs of the moment by sitting down at his desk for an hour or two. But that time had come now, for, the popular belief to the contrary, the humorist's work is not done when he is sad, and it is hard to be funny when one's heart is almost breaking.

For the greater part of the day he had struggled hopelessly to get back into the vein; it seemed to him that there was no longer any mirth left in the universe. So completely had his woe taken possession of him that he could think of nothing else, and he fin-

ished by abandoning himself to a flood of painful memories.

All at once an idea came to him. Why not write that of which his heart was full? True, it was out of his usual line, but like most professional humorists he had always felt that in pathos lay his true field, and that but for the accident which first revealed his aptitude for humor he might have made his appeal to the deepest and most tragic sentiments of humanity—an aim far nobler than to tickle the public ribs.

If depth of feeling counted for anything, surely in his present state he could write that which would wring the heart and bring tears to the eyes. Yet it seemed a sacrilege to exploit his sorrow and market his emotions for an editorial cheque, to open the windows of his soul to the vulgar gaze. On the other hand, he had never regarded any subject as sacred from his pen, and had not scrupled to treat the sorrows of others in the most frivolous manner. In this instance he had no such purpose, only to tell as simply and as tenderly as he could the story of his one romance, the romance that had so recently gone out of his life, leaving it bare and desolate.

All that night he wrote without stopping and with a spontaneity and ease to which he was quite unaccustomed, for as a rule he worked slowly and painfully, with much cogitation and constant striving for humorous effect. But on this occasion his pen could not keep pace with his thoughts; instead of composing he was transcribing; in place of assuming forcibly

an external and artificial point of view, he was merely putting into words the emotions that consumed him.

Shortly before dawn he finished, and when he read over what he had written his eyes filled and a lump arose in his throat. It was no new story he had told, this story of a woman's unfaithfulness. Murger had told it before him when he immortalized the amours of Mimi and Rodolphe, and in turn many another writer had preceded the French chronicler of Bohemia, for Mimis have loved and have proved fickle since the world began.

But at least here was a page from Life, from his own life, written at white-heat while his heart was still an open wound and while his brain was tortured by a thousand memories as yet undimmed by time. Tears blotted the pages as he read; he was living again his brief romance, every word a drop of heart's blood, every sentence a cry of anguish. It was Life, a pulsing, quivering fragment, bitter, despairing, but emphatically a fragment of Life.

A few hours later he took the manuscript to an editor who knew him. Something of the artist's pride in his work had come to the rescue, and it

was in a calm, almost cheerful mood that he submitted the story for consideration.

"If you'll wait a minute," said the editor, "I'll look it over now."

Impelled by a peculiar feeling of delicacy, of embarrassment, the writer left his chair and went over to look out of the window. There was silence for a time, then he heard sounds as of suppressed sobbing behind him. His heart beat fast as he gazed mechanically down into the crowded street. He had succeeded! It rang true! He had felt sure that it would, for he had laid bare his soul in its agony. He thrilled with exultation and artistic pride. It was a new field for him. He would show them that because he had done humorous work all his life there was no reason—

The choking sounds grew louder and louder and suddenly burst forth in a way that made him wheel around with a chill at his spine. The editor was roaring with laughter, his whole body one convulsion of mirth.

"Old man," he exclaimed at length, wiping the tears from his eyes, "this is great, simply great! The funniest thing by far that you have ever written!"



## TO ONE WHO WAITS

By Richard Kirk

WHO roams in days of sun afar  
 Will come in days of rain—  
 Your early lamp his twilight star—  
 To ease him of his pain.

Oh, he will come at noon or night,  
 When others' eyes grow dim,  
 To find your own are still as bright,  
 Because they comfort him.

# THE TURN OF THE NIGHT

By Edith M. Thomas

IN the rapt moonlight, far within the heart  
Of Summer night, when all souls dreamed or slept,  
Amid the stillest stillness, Something crept,  
Of shadow-pain, that from the Past did start,  
Or seemed to start; as, leaning there, apart,  
I thought of that old tale of one who kept  
Her jealous watch; whose sudden anger leapt,  
And slew her love, with shadow-cleaving dart!

I heard the whisper, "Come, thou gentle breeze,  
*O veni, aura!*" broken by a moan.  
That through the sleeping world still widening passed:  
A trouble came upon the grass, the trees;  
The soft-lipped flowers received it for their own,  
So, onward borne, it woke the Dawn, at last.



# HE WANTED TO KNOW

By Tom P. Morgan

"UH-WELL, now, pahson," began a certain nappy-headed brother, well known for his fondness for controversy, "I'd dess like to ax yo' one question——"

"Dat's all right, Brudder Swank," interrupted Parson Bagster, of Ebenezer Chapel, "dat's all right, sah, if yo' 'proaches de situation wid due and fittin' humidity; but don't instigate no 'scussion 'bout Joner and de whale, or why de Lawd don't kill de Devil, uh-kaze yo' knows good and well whuh dem argymunts most inginer'ly leads to. 'Dulge in all de proper inquisitions yo' wants to, muh brudder, but don't start nuthin!"

"I isn't gwine to, sah," was the reply. "But I'd dess admire to have yo' answer dis prognostication: I's had fo' wives in muh time—a right black one, a smoke-cullud one, one dat was saddle-complected, and a bright yallah one wid a mouffle o' gold teef—and what I'd like yo' to nominate, if yo' please, am which one o' dem ladies is uh-gwine to meet me at de Pearly Gate when I leaves dis yuh spear o' tribblylations? Yassah, which one is gwine to meet me? Dat's what I wants to know."

# THE INCONSISTENT BRIDEGROOM

By Carolyn Wells

**M**R. Algernon Percival Twining,  
Though his hair had turned gray,  
Was a bachelor gay;  
Yet sometimes he felt like repining  
At his lonely and celibate way.

One night he fell madly in love with  
A chorus-girl fair,  
With a sunburst of hair,  
And he thought, "I'll present the above with  
As costly a gift as I dare."

The lady accepted the present;  
Then, blushing quite red,  
He asked her to wed.  
The lady looked awfully pleasant,  
And, "Yes," very sweetly she said.

But Algernon had one misgiving;  
Ought he to en-ring  
That trusting young thing?  
When he fifty years had been living,  
And she would be twenty next Spring?

As he was exceedingly truthful,  
With tremors and fears  
He acknowledged his years;  
But the lady said, "All hearts are youthful  
When loving affection endears."

His mind was relieved, and he told her  
He'd try to forget  
The difference. "But yet,"  
He still said, "I wish you were older,  
Or else I were younger, my pet."

They were wed. When the register signing,  
The lady's eyes shone,  
And in tenderest tone,  
She murmured, "My age, Mr. Twining,  
Is exactly the same as your own."



Now men are the queerest of creatures!  
 When he saw on the page  
 The lady's real age  
 Wrath and fury distorted his features,  
 And he flew in a terrible rage.

He declared in loud accents of spite, then,  
 That she hadn't a trace  
 Of beauty or grace!  
 Said the lady, "It serves you quite right, then,  
 For believing a chorus-girl's face!"



## HIS AMBITION

"I INTEND, if I ever have sufficient leisure," a bit grimly announced the Old Codger, "to organize what seems to me to be a really much-needed concatenation, and call it the Solid Facts Club. Its work will be the making public of the Whole Story. There will be no regalia, no ritual and no flapdoodle; its members will be distinguished only by their insistence on the Entire Truth.

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"In the meantime, I s'pose everybody, including myself, will go right on mistaking pomposity for worth, volubility for statesmanship, turgidity for wisdom, and be walked on as usual by every combination of noise and nerve that happens to come along."



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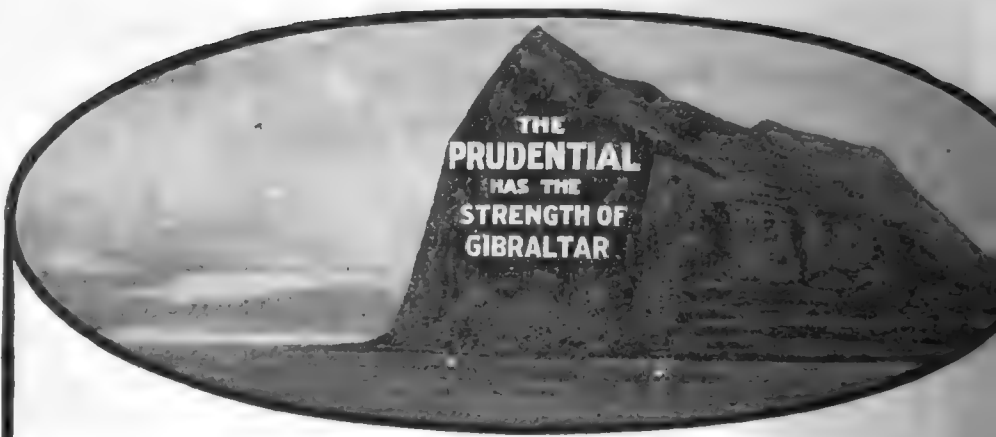
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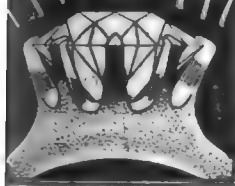
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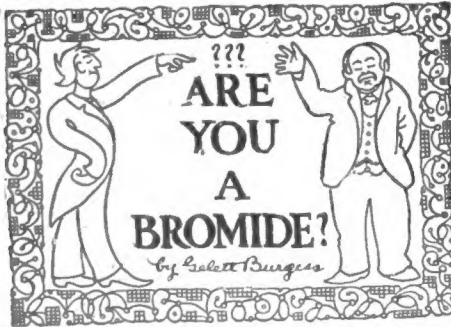
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